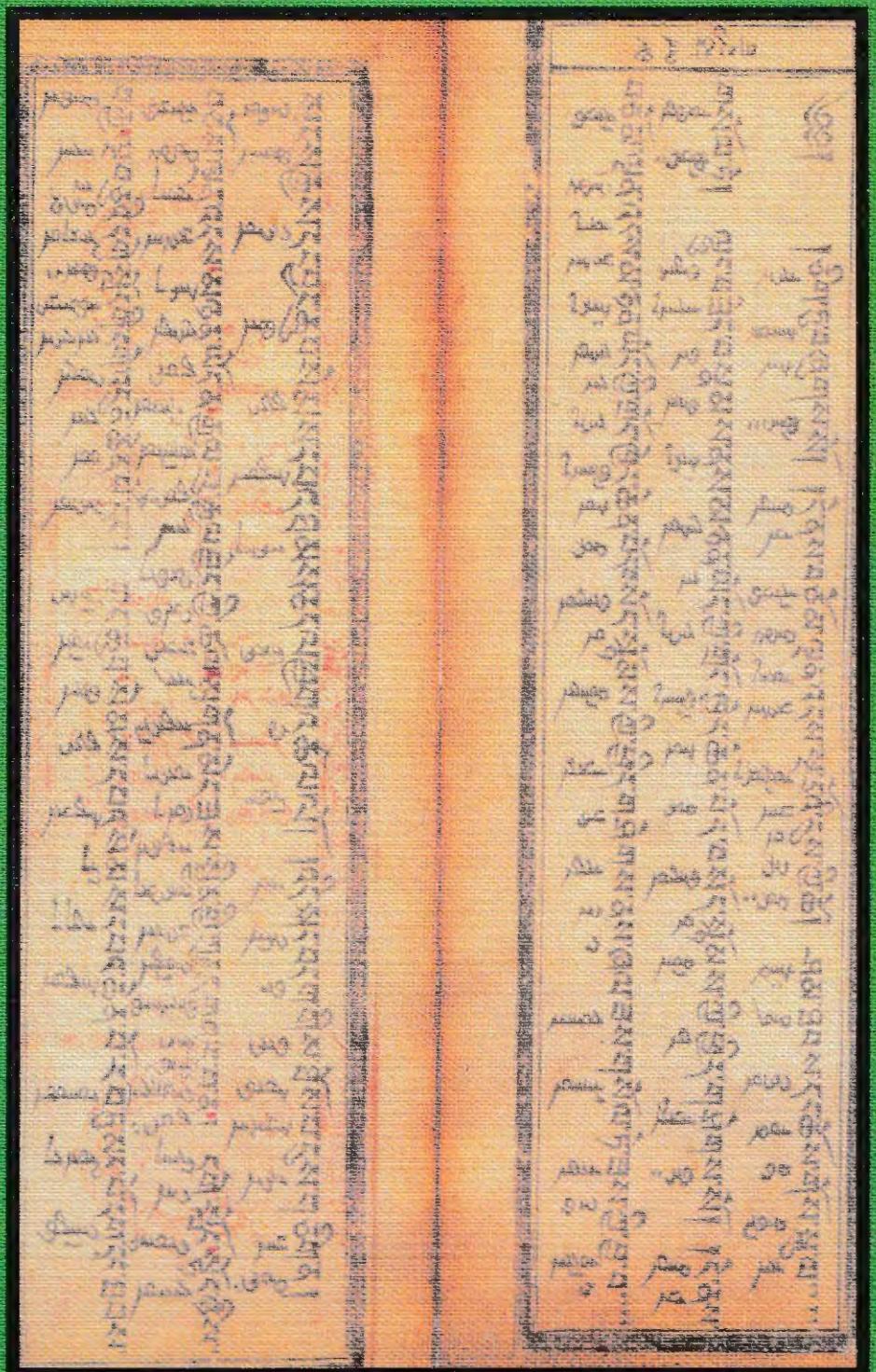


THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM AMONG WESTERN MONGOLIAN TRIBES BETWEEN THE THIRTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES



**THE SPREAD OF BUDDHISM
AMONG WESTERN MONGOLIAN TRIBES
BETWEEN THE 13TH AND 18TH CENTURIES**

**Tibetan Buddhism in the Politics and Ideology
of the Oirat People**

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Tibetan Buddhism in the Politics and Ideology
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Baatr U. Kitinov

With a Foreword by
Ven. Thupten Ngodub

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For my people, whose ancestors, the Oirats, have loved the sacred tops of Tibet and vast beautiful steppe of Dzungaria

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Foreword

The history of Buddhism among Oirats is one of the most interesting problems in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. A lot of Tibetan great lamas and scholars were touched to that process, lasted for centuries. The Oirats experienced different Tibetan Buddhist traditions, such as Nyingma, Kagyu, Geluk. And I hope, that this book will help you to know and understand this medieval period of Buddhist history in Central Asia, to see, that our common past can help us to develop the friendship and cooperation for the benefit of all living beings.

Lama Thupten Ngodub,
The Medium of the Tibet State Oracle

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Introduction

The history of the spreading and development of Buddhism among the Oirats is part of the complex and multifaceted process of this religion's growing influence. The present study, which concerns this part of the process, will thus contribute to the field of Buddhist Studies in general. At the same time it will give an insight into how the Oirat society developed and interacted with the outside world; and how the Sangha had an important influence on the formation of those relations' specific character.

The Oirats were the Western Mongolian peoples who made significant impact on the history of Central Asian people for a period of several centuries (in fact, from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries). Entering onto the historic scene under the leadership of Genghis Khan, the Oirats, fighting for their own independence, were constantly engaged in wars against the Mongols, Chinese and Turkic peoples. In the middle of the fifteenth century the Oirats managed to unite the whole of the Mongolian world under their rule, while two centuries later, they formed three separate states: that of Dzungarian state in Central Asia, Khoshout state in northern Tibet, and the Kalmyk (Torgout) state near the Caspian Sea in Russia.

Interest in the Oirats and their history has been quite considerable and a number of issues have been highlighted, both in Russian and foreign historiography. It should be

noted, however, that the pre-Dzungarian period of Oirat history (i.e. up to the middle of the seventeenth century) has been the least investigated area in historical scholarship. The importance of this period cannot be overestimated since it was then that the foundations for their further development were formed. It was also then that the Oirats finally came to their Buddhist outlook and Buddhist culture (a local example of Buddhist civilization) as part of their socio-political development. Buddhism as a systemic religion fundamentally differed from the primitive cults of their earlier society and was much more in line with the social changes taking place at the time and thus succeeded in replacing the old beliefs of the Oirats.

The Buddhist tradition of the Oirats of the early Middle Ages is indissolubly connected with its further development among the Oirats (the Kalmyks) of the late Middle Ages. The examination of this Buddhist tradition, in its early stages being appropriated by the Oirats as their dominant worldview, allows a greater degree of certainty in answering numerous questions as far as the study of the history and culture of the Oirats and Kalmyks of later periods.

The research papers currently available on the history of Buddhist traditions of the Mongolian-language speaking peoples are rather numerous but most are devoted to the analysis of the religious situation in Mongolia at large, or the Buddhist tradition of the Eastern Mongolians, thus implying that the Mongolians were a single nation. However, this is far from the truth as in reality there always were divisions of the Mongolian world into smaller groups and clans, often

competing and feuding with one another. This fact taken into consideration, many of the issues of the history of the Mongolian-language speaking people appear to have been largely overlooked or given a too narrow interpretation, thus leaving questions of fundamental importance and, in particular, the history of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats without satisfactory answers.

It should also be noted that most of the research has been devoted to the study of Buddhism in the Mongolian empire during its formative years, throughout the period of its existence, as well as the time since the second half of the sixteenth century. This time saw the meeting of Sodnam Gyatso, head of the Tibetan Buddhist School of Geluk, with Altan, the Khan of the Eastern Mongolians (the Tumet).

There has been a predominant view in the historiography according to which, after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongolians (the Oirats included) “forgot” the Buddhist traditions and reverted to their old practice of shamanism. This view of the religious situation of the time does not help explain the reasons for the rapid spread of the Geluk School’s teachings among these people. It is also assumed that the Oirats adhered to the teachings of this School in particular, and Buddhism in general only after the Mongols had done so. This kind of chronological approach prevents the reconstruction of an objective picture of the Oirat and Kalmyk past. To illustrate the point, one can refer, for instance, to the difficulty arising with dating the Kalmyk heroic epic "Djanggar": The scholars, on the one hand, agree on the ancient character of the epic but, on the other hand,

have to attribute the time of the main body of the poem as being composed in the seventeenth century, because the Buddhist elements in it could appear only at that time. So, they suppose that the beginning of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats could be traced to that period [Nekludov, 1984:72-74].

A far more significant problem though is the difficulty of outlining the chronological framework of the first Tibetan Buddhist schools' arrival and their activities among the Mongolian-language speaking people, as well as the identification of the schools themselves. The Oirats were denied the right to have any Tibetan religious tradition of their own in the period of the Mongolian Empire, or in any case to have one different from that which was dominant in the Mongolian imperial court in China. Only in the 1990's a number of publications appeared in which the authors, following on from the well-known fact of the Yuan emperors' patronage of the Sakya School, jumped to the conclusion that the Oirats adhered to the same School. As it will be investigated below, such kind of view shows the absence of the necessary sources.

Despite the fact that there are now a sufficient number of works on the history of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people, no special study has been undertaken to examine the stages, or periods of the history of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats, whether it had any particular features, or influence on the politics of the Oirats. This is due to the fact that the historical sources in the field are scarce. The Oirats, whose Buddhist cultural heritage and

civilization the present work attempts to study were in fact almost completely cut down by the Qing rulers of China in the first half of the eighteenth century, while most of their unique documents were lost and the artifacts of their material culture were destroyed. Very little is left either of the cultural heritage of the Kalmyks who, alongside with numerous other peoples of the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, contributed to the history of Russia (the wars of Peter the Great's era, Russian-Turkish Wars, the Patriotic War of 1812-1814., Stepan Razin's, Emelyan Pugachev's Uprisings, World War I, the Great Patriotic war, exile to Siberia, etc.).

The Chinese, Mongolian and Turkic sources, which contain a large amount of information on the political, cultural and economic history of the Oirats and their neighbors, very little reference to the problem under study. Thus the author of the present monograph has relied chiefly on the Kalmyk and Tibetan sources, which have not been studied thoroughly along the lines of the present research.

Hence, the main methodology is comparative use of various sources, maintaining the principles of historical objectivity.

Typically, the study of Buddhism involves the analysis of its philosophical and ideological aspects, however the historian should be more interested in outlining the time the tradition started and studying the role of religion, as well as the way its was being appropriated by the receiving culture and society. Thus an examination of the historical processes involving the development of a particular Buddhist tradition will give us the key to a better understanding of Buddhism in general. One cannot but agree here with S. Oldenburg, who wrote as

early as the beginning of the last century: “There are surprisingly few attempts to understand the history of its (i.e. Buddhist – B.K.) tradition, while to have no idea about it means to fail to understand Buddhism at any stage of its development”¹ [Oldenburg, 1996:354]. Very often Buddhism is studied “as if it existed without any reference to time and space”² [ibid.]. This is quite true as far as the history of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats is concerned, as in terms of its theoretical aspect, it strictly followed the Tibetan canons, while in its practical application by the Oirats, the first world religion developed some very specific features. Unfortunately, the works by Oirat thinkers and lamas concerning the theory of Buddhism haven’t been studied so far, mainly because they were either lost or are practically out of reach. At the same time there has been no system in rendering the specific features of Oirat Buddhism open to observation, either no attention has been paid to the time when any of Buddhist schools arrived to start their activities in their environment or to particular circumstances of their operation.

For Buddhism to be adopted in a new environment the receiving culture should have the appropriate conditions or phenomena developed which may be open to its adoption, or be similar to it in content and meaning. According to B. Vladimirtsov, “No state power was able to contribute to the spread of the new faith in such a short time, unless the

¹ “поражает незначительное число попыток разобраться в его развитии, без представления о котором немыслимо понимание буддизма в любой из стадий этого развития”.

² “как бы вне времени и пространства”.

society itself was ready to receive and appropriate the new ideas”³ [Vladimirtsov, 1919:11]. In my view, here we can meant the systemic role played by Nestorian Christianity in the case of the Oirats. This branch of Eastern Christianity had a considerable influence on certain groups of western Mongolians in the pre-Genghis Khan era. The validity of this concept especially increases when applied to the interpretation of the rapid spread of the second (middle of the thirteenth century), and especially the third (the fifteenth century) waves of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people. It also justifies the elaboration of the role of Buddhism of the Oirats not only in terms of its original culture (Tibetan), but also within a more general methodological framework.

The aim of the present work is the elaboration of the principal stages of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats, the study of the causes and conditions that influenced its specific form, and the influence of the religion on the history of the people. The paper deals with the history of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats concerning the period preceding the formation of Dzungarian Khanate (from the thirteenth to the middle of the seventeenth centuries). It also examines the conditions under which it became possible to appropriate the doctrine, as well as the facts revealing the mechanism of interactions between the community in question and its state.

³ “Никакая государственная власть не могла бы распространить новой веры так скоро, если бы не оказалось подходящей почвы для восприятия новых идей в самом обществе”.

For the first time, relying on the original sources, the theory of the three phases (waves) of the spread of Buddhism that took place in the history of the western Mongols has been elaborated. The research also deals with the issue of specific ethnic implications of the Mongolian society which undoubtedly interfered in the way various Tibetan religious teachings were appropriated in their environment. Here special attention is given to the question of the ethnic identification of the Mongolian peoples referred to as “sog” and “khor” in the Tibetan sources. The present study has shown that the Western Mongolians followed not Sakya but Kagyu, a different School of Tibetan Buddhism. It has also analyzed special circumstances that led to the predominance of the Geluk School among the Oirats since the sixteenth century. The research has raised the question of possible religious implications resulting in armed conflicts between the Oirats and Mongolians, as they supported different lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. A preliminary study of Buddhism of the Oirats in Persia has also been conducted in the paper.

In addition, the research touches upon a number of other issues, in particular, the location of the Western Mongols in Central Asia in the early Middle Ages; the religious beliefs of the western Mongols and the spread of Tibetan Buddhism among them; the political history of the Oirats in connection with their religious history; the role and importance of the first Oirat preachers of the Geluk School in spreading its influence on the rest of the Mongolian world; the impact of China's Ming and Qing dynasties on the spread of Buddhism

in the Mongolian society; and tantric and shamanistic practices among the Oirats.

The investigation of these questions would not have led to the elaboration of the key issues concerning the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism of the Oirats, if the question of a number of specific characteristics of the history of Buddhism of the western Mongolians had not been not raised and given an adequate treatment here. This question is part of the theory according to which the Eastern and Western Mongolians belong to the same family, but for all their closeness they are separate nations, which has been demonstrated with the investigation of another facet of the cultural individuality of the Oirats and Kalmyks.

As a result of the interactions with the traditional beliefs, attitudes and customs of the people and dependence on the inner and outer situations of Tibet and Mongolian peoples, Buddhism of the Oirats developed certain specifically local features. However, the existence of separate "Oirat" Buddhism is out of the question, because they had nothing as unique as the Mongolians who developed an elaborate hierarchical organization (with their religious leader, educational system, etc.). Thus, Buddhism of the Oirats should be seen as just a specific variant of Tibetan Buddhism. It should be pointed out however, that the Buddhism of the Kalmyks in Russia in its turn had greater differences from the original Tibetan form as compared with that of the Oirats of Central Asia.

There is also another aspect of the problem.

The specific character of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats implies among other things the operation of various Buddhist schools among the Oirats that had their specific relationships with the Khan's power structure on the ethnic (sub-ethnic) and political levels.

In the situation of the medieval Oirat society with its different religious beliefs, the rise of Buddhism led to its dominant position among others and its transformation into the ideology of the state. In the periods of social tensions in the society (for example, because of a war) Buddhism played its role legitimizing behaviors of the members of the society departing from Buddhist ethics, thus consolidating its union with the power structures. Therefore, it may be concluded that Buddhism for the Oirats was an ideological instrument rather than a religious one, and that is why despite a close alliance of the sangha and the state, of the teaching and political strategy, lamas of the Western Mongolians never exercised such an influence as they had among the Eastern Mongolians. This situation has a number of important implications which explain some specific features of the religious tradition of the Oirats (such as absence of "reincarnations", the small numbers of monks, the decentralization of the religious community, etc.).

Thus the main objectives of this research may be formulated as follows:

- 1) The examination of the religious situation of the Oirats before they became part of Genghis Khan's empire, with special attention given to the Uyghur Buddhism, in particular.

- 2) The study of the specific character of the appropriation of Tibetan Buddhism by Western and Eastern Mongolians and the extent to which Buddhism was influential among the Oirats in Yuan and Ming periods.
- 3) The study of the reasons for the quick spread of the Geluk as the dominant teaching among the Oirats and the way it gained the influence.
- 4) The identification of typological factors contributing to the specific character of the Buddhist lineage of the Oirats. The author does not examine the teachings of Buddhism themselves, but focuses on the socio-political role of the sangha in the Oirat society in the period under investigation.

To deal with the objectives formulated above it is necessary to evaluate the level of interactions between the Oirats and Tibetan lamas; examining in this connection the changes in the policy of Oirat Khans which resulted in strengthening of the lineage of Tibetan Buddhism supported by them not only among the Oirat groups themselves, but among the Mongolian peoples in general, as well as in Tibet itself. It is necessary therefore to have an idea about the major patterns of historical processes in Central Asia and study the ethnogenesis of the western Mongols during the period in question. Realizing that it is beyond the scope of the present study to give a complete picture of the history of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats, the author is determined to outline at least the chronological framework within which particular schools became important, as well as the reasons for their successful propaganda among groups and clans of the Western Mongolians, to reveal the relationship between

the religious community and the state, Tibet and the Oirats, as well as to identify specific Tibetan religious schools that operated in the Oirat environment.

The monograph also deals with the facts of the medieval history of the Oirats, including the description of the stages through which the Buddhist tradition of the Western Mongolians underwent in its development, as well as the ethnic and other typological characteristics of the process involved. It also deals with the investigation of alliances formed by different Tibetan schools with Oirat groups and clans, first of all, with the Dzungars, Torgouts and Khoshouts. Another major Oirat clan, the Derbet, played a prominent role in the history of Oirat and Kalmyk Buddhism at a later stage, probably, since the late eighteenth century (for some representatives of famous lamas of this Kalmyk group see, for example: [Geshe Wangyal, 1994]). The group of Buzava that began to form on the basis of Derbets and Torgouts since the eighteenth century contributed to the promotion and development of Buddhism in a number of areas on the borders of the Kalmyk Khanate such as the Kalmyk enclaves in the Caucasus, the Kuban, Don and other regions of the Russian empire [Koldong, 1984].

Some of the above-mentioned problems involve Tibetan studies as well. Here it should be noted, that as there is a great variety of names and terms to denote Tibetan Buddhist schools (for example, the Karmapa and Karma, or “a sect”, “a branch”, “a direction”, etc.), the terms such as “School”, “sub-school”, “lineage”, are preferred for the present discussion while the names of schools are spelled without the

ending “-pa” (for example, Geluk but not Gelukpa). Unfortunately, there is quite a considerable percentage of articles and books in historiography, where the authors mix the names of Tibetan schools, as well as their teachings; names and titles of lamas are also often confused, etc. Thus, the authors dealing with the history of the Dalai Lamas, note that the 4th Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso “became the first Panchen Lama, starting a new lineage of ‘reincarnations’, teachers of the Dalai Lamas”⁴ [The History of Nations, 1986:256]. This passage, unfortunately, leaves the reader in doubt as to whether Yonten Gyatso was the Dalai Lama or Panchen Lama. Let us give another typical example. Ts. Purbueva, identifying the Nyingma School as a “Red Hat” School, adds another school, Sakya, to the same category, also known in the literature as a “Red Hat” School as she writes: “Its (i.e. Nyingma – B.K.) key preachers were five chief Sakya Lamas”⁵ [Purbueva, 1984:24].

It should be noted here that the division of Tibetan Buddhism into two main branches – “Yellow Hat” and “Red Hat” is rather arbitrary. If the former one is homogeneous and has no affiliations, and lamas of the group put on the monk’s yellow hats during some of the services and ceremonies, the latter School is not always “Red Hat” and is further divided into many lineages of Tibetan Buddhist thought.

Such lineages of Tibetan Buddhism as Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma are commonly known as “Red Hat” which then are

⁴ “стал первым панчен-ламой, положив начало новой линии “перерожденцев”, учителей Далай лам”.

⁵ “Основными ее проповедниками были пять первых сакьяских лам”.

further divided into smaller sections (this is especially characteristic of Kagyu). Thus within the Karma sub-school of the Kagyu School there are two lineages – so-called “Black Hat” Karma Kagyu and “Red Hat” Karma Kagyu, this separation occurred during Karma Bakshi’s lifetime (1206-1283), the second head of Karma Kagyu.

As far as the doctrine is concerned it should be noted straightaway that the differences between all Buddhist schools were not of a fundamental nature: “They proceed from essentially the same premises, but somewhat differ in the mode of exhortation”⁶ [Dalai Lama XIV, 1991:23]. For example, Geluk and Sakya teachings are given in terms of a gradual way, while in some of Kagyu and Nyingma texts the path is presented from the perspective of “those who cover all at once”⁷ [Berzin, 1993]. The teaching in Kagyu is given mainly proceeding from the “nature of Buddha”, that is the nature of the mind; in Geluk the emphasis is on communication with the Teacher, when the stages of growth are determined by a student’s inner motivation. In Sakya the teaching is based on discussions of the problem of suffering, and in Nyingma it is based on discussions of the so-called “nine paths”, representing an independent step-by-step system of texts’ classification which is different from groupings existing in other schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

It should be noted that Nyingma is the oldest (hence, by the way, the name: Tib. Rnying ma - literally “old doctrine”)

⁶ “В основе своей они едины, но несколько различаются в способе наставления”.

⁷ “тех, кто проходит все сразу”.

School, founded in the ninth century by the well-known tantric master Padmasambhava. The Sakya and Kagyu appeared later in the eleventh-twelfth centuries; The Geluk School, continuing the teachings of the once famous Kadam School, appeared in the late fourteenth century.

Proceeding from what has been said above, the author does not tend to believe that the primary reasons for the predominance of one or another lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, in particular, among the Mongolian people, are rooted in the teachings of various schools themselves. It will be shown further that it is more probable that the main reason, as we see it, was the territorial proximity of a certain Buddhist school to a certain group of Mongolian people. Indeed, inside Tibet itself the situation was similar, i.e. the influence of the monasteries on their local communities accounted for their commitment to the teaching of the local monastery. Other reasons may be like the worship of a particular God (Bodhisattva) by certain groups, for example, the ritual of the worship of Hevajra is characteristic of the Sakya, or methods and forms of retreat, which differ from school to school, and so on. The choices as to which of the particular schools of Tibetan Buddhism to support were made by the Mongolian khans under the influence of political and other events and processes in Central Asia, where the Mongolian peoples were also involved.

Thus, this study may also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the causes and course of events taking place in Tibet from the thirteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century.

The chronological parameters of the present study were determined by the character of the research problems raised in the paper. Thus the Oirats' first contact with Buddhism (through the Uyghur) dates back to the thirteenth century. It was also the time when the conditions were being formed which finally led to the religious clashes in Tibet at the end of the century, which saw the rival factions of the Mongolian clans for the first time supporting the fighting parties.

The 40s of the seventeenth century marked the other chronological limit of the research as it was the time when the three Oirat states were finally formed in Eurasia, with the Geluk School as well as others of Tibetan Buddhism exerting a different degree of influence there. From this time, the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats developed its special features in each of these khanates. The process in Dzungaria and especially in Khoshout khanates was to a great extent influenced by the personality of the Dalai Lama, who became both the secular and spiritual ruler of Tibet thanks to the assistance of the Khoshouts in 1642, as well as by the Manchu emperors, who occupied the throne of the Celestial Empire in 1644. The Buddhism of the Kalmyks in Russia was formed under the conditions of geographical remoteness of Tibet and the dominance of Geluk School. While dealing with the special situation of Buddhism among Kalmyks, the author has to extend the chronological framework until the second half of the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER I. OVERVIEW OF SOURCES AND LITERATURE ON THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM OF THE OIRATS

The works of Russian and foreign scholars investigating the history of Buddhism in Central Asia have, to a certain extent, touched upon the history of the spread and influence of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people. However, the main problem that an interested researcher encounters with their works is that they usually do not make a clear distinction between the Eastern and Western Mongolians (known also as Oirats). Using available sources, the author of the present book offers his own solution to the problem of "who is who" and thus it becomes possible to make use of the factual material in those works, especially marking out the specifics of the clans' (tribes) histories.

The present monograph is based on a variety of different sources (both original and translations), archival materials, and special and general articles and books on the history of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia. It should also be pointed out that a number of sources have been used for the first time in the Russian historiography in terms of the subject under consideration.

1.1. Tibetan sources

The importance of using these sources in the study of Buddhism of the Oirats is obvious. The famous Russian scholar on Tibetan studies A. Vostrikov noted that the works of Tibetan authors are important and relevant sources for the history of the spread of Buddhism in countries concerned [Vostrikov, 1962:50]. A similar opinion was expressed by Y. Roerich who wrote: “The Tibetan written sources will be helpful to us in understanding and clarifying many points in the study of this period (XIII-XIV centuries), which is so important for the history of Asia, as well as world history”⁸ [Roerich, 1958:346].

However, it must be remembered that the information they contain about real events is often mixed with religious myths, “a feature characteristic of all medieval historiography in general”⁹ [Bira, 1964:56]. This tendency is also evident in the works touching in one way or another upon the period of the Mongolian conquests or in the works by Mongolians on Buddhism.

There exists a vast literature in the Tibetan language on the history of the spread of Buddhist teachings among Mongolian people. Those which deal with the Buddhism of the Eastern Mongolians have already been highlighted in Mongolian studies. However, little has been done so far by

⁸ “Тибетские письменные источники помогут нам уяснить и уточнить многое в изучении этой эпохи (XIII—XIV века), столь важной для истории Азии и мировой истории в целом”.

⁹ “чайта, характерная для всей средневековой историографии вообще”.

way of using the same sources to investigate the Buddhism of the Western Mongolians, or the Oirats. The reasons for this situation are to be seen first of all in the absence of reliable criteria for identifying the ethnic character of the Mongolian groups and clans described in the Tibetan sources, besides very little interest in this perspective shown so far by scholars and, last but not least, the absence of fundamental works on the Oirats' medieval history in general. It is only recently that Tibetan texts dealing specifically with the Oirats, including the history of Buddhism among these groups, were newly discovered and presented to the academic community.

Since, as has already been mentioned, the literature in the Tibetan language devoted to the Buddhism of the Mongolian people is enormous, let us deal here only with those that are relevant to the history of the Buddhism of the Oirats (selected from a long list of available works in the original and in translation). One of these works is "The Red Annals" by Kunga Dorje [Tshal pa kun dga rdo rjes brtsams, 1981], also known as "The Red Annals of the Tshal" (Tshal pa deb dmar). The text of the treatise was published for the first time by the Tibetan Institute in Sikkim (India) in 1961 [The Red Annals, 1961]. The author, whose name was Kunga Dorje and monastic name Situ Gebi Lodro (si tu dge ba'i blo gros), was a contemporary of the famous Tibetan historian Budon Rinchenbub (1290-1364). Kunga Dorje belonged to the elite of Gungthang, the main monastery of Tshal School founded in 1187. Few facts are known about his life and those are mostly found in "History of Tibet" by the 5th Dalai Lama, "Pagsam-Jonsan" by Sumba Khambo and "The Blue Annals" by Shonnu Pal. Kunga Dorje, Monlam Dorje's eldest son,

who was famous for his knowledge of Buddhist teachings and traditions of the past. He was also the founder of the Ribo Chephel monastery [Bira, 1964:70; "Pagsam-Jonsan", 1991:36-37]. Although A. Vostrikov did not have the work at his disposal, he relied on his critical analysis of a number of Tibetan texts concerning Situ Gebi Lodro's text.

"The Red Annals" were written under a strong influence of the historical tradition of the Mongolians of the time [Bira, 1964:62], relying heavily on the Mongolian and Chinese historical sources which are not available to us at present. Thus Sh. Bira draws attention to the unknown Mongolian chronicle "The Great Tobchi". He also mentions the Tibetan work "Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long" ("A Bright Mirror of Royal Genealogies") and "Tang Shu", a chronicle of the Chinese works among the sources of "The Red Annals". Y. Roerich believed that "The Red Annals" were based on the sources in wide circulation in the Yuan Empire, and the same sources formed the database for Rashid al-Din's well-known work [Roerich, 1958:334]. Kunga Dorje had an assistant - a certain Jambal-Toshrigon who helped him during the preparation of his work; Bira believes the latter was a Mongolian [Bira, 1978:109].

"The Red Annals" were held in high esteem in Tibet [Vostrikov, 1962:61] and were referred to by many Tibetan historians. Sh. Bira noted that Shonnu Pal used Kunga Dorje's work almost verbatim, even copying some of his mistakes [Bira, 1964:74]. This Kunga Dorje's book deals with the religious history of Tibet against the broad background of the history of its neighboring countries

including India, China, Xi-Xia (Tangut state) and Mongolia. The book is of great interest for the present discussion, because alongside an outline of the genealogy of the khans and the history of Mongolian-Tibetan relations in the period from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, it contains information concerning the dates and details of the Oirats and Mongolians' first introduction to Tibetan Buddhism and the specific Buddhist schools involved. The source's weakness, however, is a somewhat exaggerated picture of Tibet's "glorious past" and respectively a negative attitude to the situation of the time the work itself was written. As G. Tucci pointed out, "this insistence on ancient times, the glorification of the old dynasties and the delight in ancient glories, appeared ... in the times... when national consciousness was awakened" [Tucci, 1949, I:140]. Besides G. Tucci [Tucci, 1949, II:629-630] and Sh. Bira [Bira, 1964:69-81], the work was analyzed by A. Vostrikov.

At this point the author of the present work should express his special thanks to Tashi Tsering, the Tibetan scholar and researcher of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh, India), for his invaluable assistance with the reading of some most difficult passages of Kunga Dorje' work.

Of great interest is also the information included in the vast chronicle "Buddhist Transmission History – The Scholarly Banquet" by Pawo Tsuglag¹⁰ Trengwa (1504-1566, second incarnation in Nenang Pawo Rinpoche lineage) written in 1564 [Dpa 'bo gtsug lag phreng bas brtsams pa, 1986]. The

¹⁰ The title "Tsuglag" means "The collection of the Doctrine".

work describes in detail the history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Khotan and among the Tangut (Tibetan “mi nyak” - Minyak). The evidence about Xi-Xia (Tangut, or Minyak state), where Genghis Khan’s meetings with Tshal Kagyu monks took place, as well as the information on the Mongol conquerors’ introduction to Tibetan Buddhism show a real picture of the Mongol nobility’s interest in spreading Tibetan Buddhism among their subjects. Sh. Bira pointed out that the author of “The Scholarly Banquet” had at his disposal earlier sources on the history of Mongolia [Bira, 1964:92], as compared with Kunga Dorje and Shonnu Pal, but these also support the data of Tibetan historians’ works mentioned above about the existence of special religious relationships between the Mongolian Khans and Tibetan schools.

In Russian literature this source was discussed only in Sh. Bira’s book “On the ‘Golden Book’ of Sh. Damdin” [Bira, 1964:91-92]. A. Vostrikov characterized it as a treatise on the history of Buddhism in Tibet, attributing it to the sixteenth century [Vostrikov, 1962:94] and this evidence was further relied on by R. Pubaev [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:193, rcf. 20], who also added that Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa was known as the “second astronomer” of Tibet. It is also known, that he founded Lhalung Gompa (Southern Tibet) as the second seat for lineage of Pawos, and author of a large commentary on Shantideva’s “Entering the Bodhisattva Way of Life” (Bodhisattva-Charya-Avatar). No other information is known about the author of “Buddhist Transmission History”.

There are also references to Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa's chronicle in the works by L. Petech [Petech, 1983], D. Snellgrove [Snellgrove, 1987, II:409-410] and in several articles by E. Sperling [Sperling, 1979:280-289]. Thus it is unfortunate that the chronicle has not been studied and discussed in greater detail by scholars. At this point the author of the present work would like to express his indebtedness to Lama Tubden Thokmey of Namgyal Monastery (Himachal Pradesh, India) for his insightful comments which helped to clarify some parts of the treatise in question.

The next work of importance is "The Blue Annals" (deb ther sngon po), singled out by A. Vostrikov as one of the most remarkable treatises of Tibetan historiography [Vostrikov, 1962:92]. It was written by Go Lotsawa Shonnu Pal ('gos lo tsa ba gshon nu dpal, 1392-1481) in 1476-1478 and three xylographic issues followed; in all the work has 485 pages [Vostrikov, 1962:93].

Shonnu Pal focuses on the history of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as on the theory and practice of the teaching. But the book also contains large evidence about the country's secular history, including all the data known to Shonnu Pal on the genealogy of the Tibetan kings, Chinese emperors, as well as family histories of the Mongolian khans. There is also a separate part highlighting the history of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism and their teachings.

Some of Shonnu Pal's data were later corrected by the scholars of Tibetan studies. Thus according to Y. Roerich, the author of "The Blue Annals" was wrong in dating back

Langdarma's persecution of Buddhists 60 years before the actual event took place. It should be noted, however, that in Tibetan historiography the event was attributed either to the year of 841 or to 901, since both are years of the Iron Hen, while Y. Roerich finally made a conclusion that it was the year of 841 that saw the persecution of Buddhists [Roerich, 1976, I:V-XIX]. Tibetan historians themselves sometimes made corrections in Shonnu Pal's evidence; for example, Sumba Khambo noted that "in "The Blue Annals" argued that Genghis Khan ... was born in the year of the water-tiger (1182), but it is more likely that it happened this year"¹¹ (1162 – B.K.) [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:67]. Accordingly, Sumba Khambo assigned the year of Genghis Khan's death to 1227 [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:76]. These dates of the Khagan's life have become accepted in the modern scholarship. According to Sh. Bira, Shonnu Pal's mistakes of this kind may be accounted for by his uncritical treatment of the information about Genghis Khan in Kunga Dorje' "The Red Annals" [Bira, 1964:78]. Nevertheless, "The Blue Annals" were and still are an invaluable source for scholars and are cited almost by every specialist of Tibetan studies. The text was translated from Tibetan into English and published in India by Y. Roerich; and since that time the English translation has been published several times [Roerich, 1949; 1976]. Not long ago its Russian translation was also published.

¹¹ "в 'Голубых анналах' ... утверждается, что Чингиз-хан... был года воды-тигра (1182 г.) года рождения, но возможно, что он родился в этом году".

Of special interest for the present study are two more Tibetan sources, namely the works by the 5th Dalai Lama. One is “History About the Noble Deeds of Superior Kings and Ministers of the Snow Land” (henceforth referred to as “History of Tibet”) [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1967] and the other is titled “History of Honorable Sodnam Gyatso’s Life” (further – “The Biography of the Third Dalai Lama”) [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1977].

The 5th Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) was born to a family with traditional ties to the Nyingma School. At an early age he was discovered as the reincarnation of Yonten Gyatso, the 4th Dalai Lama (yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589-1616), but had to remain in hiding because of the danger posed by the Karma who were rivals of the Geluks, and was only enthroned in 1625. Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso is known in Tibetan history as an outstanding statesman and religious leader of the seventeenth century. He was the first of the Geluk leaders to become both the secular and religious head of Tibet in 1642 thanks to the support by the Oirat clan of the Khoshout and Gushi Khan (bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po), their leader. It was at the time of this Dalai Lama, when started the construction of the Potala Palace. For his achievements in many fields Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso came to be known as the Great 5th Dalai Lama and this is the way he is frequently referred to in Tibetan literature.

The 5th Dalai Lama is also the author of numerous works, the most famous among them is “History of Tibet” (“Rgyal ba bnga pa'i deb ther”), which is known under different names

in scholarship [Vostrikov, 1962:62]. The book was written at the request of Gushi Khan in 1643. It is a single story divided by poetic lines into 21 parts, in which the Dalai Lama narrates the history of Tibet retelling the dynasty chronicles. He also refers to Kunga Dorge and Pawo Tsuglag Trengwas' works. Of exceptional importance is the data of the chronicle concerning the formation of different Tibetan Buddhist schools and their activities, as well as the history of their interactions both between themselves and the Mongolian Khans. The treatise is concluded with the description of high deeds of Gushi Khan, the conqueror of Tibet.

“There can be no doubt that “History of Tibet” is one of the most important and interesting works in Tibetan historiography”¹² [Vostrikov, 1962:63]. Therefore it is not surprising that its data has been actively used not only by Tibetan historians but also by Mongolian ones, including the anonymous author of “Shara Tuuji” [Shara Tuuji, 1967:15] and Ishiba-dan, the author of “Erdeniin Erike” [Puchkovsky, 1957:59]. One of the first to pay attention to the work was S. Ch. Das, the famous Indian Tibetologist, but his retelling was “too carelessly done and may result only in misunderstandings”¹³ [Vostrikov, 1962:63]. The larger part of “History of Tibet” was published by G. Tucci [Tucci, 1949, II:625-651] and this has become the standard source for almost every scholar in the field. R.N. Krapivina, well-known Russian scholars in Tibetan studies, has undertaken a

¹² “‘История Тибета’ является, бесспорно, одним из самых важных и самых интересных произведений тибетской историографии”.

¹³ “сделан настолько небрежно, что может повести лишь к разного рода недоразумениям”.

large research work on the treatise [From History, 1992]. The exceptional importance of the Dalai Lama's work was often pointed out by historians [Tucci, 1949, I:45; Bira, 1964:74-75]. The treatise was published in Beijing in 1957; the present paper relies on the variant in Tibetan published in Delhi in 1967.

The 5th Dalai Lama's other treatise "The Biography of the Third Dalai Lama" written in 1646 is of special interest for the present work because besides Sodnam Gyatso's (the 3rd Dalai Lama's) life description, it contains data concerning the particular sub-ethnic divisions of the Oirats who had contacts with Tibetans in different periods of their history. It also includes a description of the future Dalai Lama's meetings with the Oirats. The work further deals with Mongolian-Tibetan interactions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the basis of reliable sources. Much of its detailed evidence was later borrowed by Mongolian chroniclers of the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The history of Buddhism in Amdo is the subject of Konchog Tanpa Rabgye's (dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, born in 1801) treatise titled "The Ocean Book" (commonly known as "Debter-dzhamtso" in Russian academic literature). The author was a senior monk of one of the major monasteries in Amdo – that of Labrang. The treatise which has 216 pages was written in 1833-1865 [Vostrikov, 1962:71]. Its sources were various monastic chronicles both of Central Tibet and Amdo, ancient clan chronicles, such as the chronicle of ancient Lan (rlangs) and Ringpung (ring spungs) clans, etc.

Konchog Tanpa Rabgye also deals with the history of the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia and partly in China and describes the biographies of major Tibetan, Tangut and Mongolian Buddhist monks. On top of this he presents some information concerning the history of a number of monasteries and temples. This work was an important source for the present research because the Oirats lived on the borderline of Amdo and in its northern areas and, of course, it was only natural that the information about them should find its way into the Tibetan treatises, including "The Ocean Book". It was translated into Russian and investigated by R. Dugarov [Dugarov, 1983], whose translation was used in the present work.

The present research is also based on evidence found in the well known work on the history of Buddhism in Mongolia titled "Hor chos 'byung" by Gushi Lobsan Tsempel (gu shri blo bzang che 'phel). It was written in the Tashi Galdan Shaddub Ling monastery (bkra shis dga' ldan bsad sgrub ling) in 1819 and includes data from various Tibetan and Mongolian chronicles which is today only available to us in parts.

"Hor chos 'byung" is one of the few treatises especially concerned with the history of Buddhism among the Mongolian clans. It was translated into German and published by G. Huth [Huth, 1892; 1896] and since then it has become one of the sources frequently referred to by specialists in the field. It was cited, for example, by Ch. Bell [Bell, 1992:65-66], B. Laufer [Laufer, 1927:45] and many others. However, A. Vostrikov commented that "Huth's

translation leaves much to be desired”¹⁴ [Vostrikov, 1962:101] as the translator made a mistake even in the author’s name and distorted some of the statements of the original.

It is well-known that evidence provided by any author should be verified first of all by comparing it with data found in other works, (which may be written at different times), while those authors need not necessarily be Tibetans themselves. Tibetan sources are not only those written by Tibetans but also those authored by representatives of the neighboring nations and, in particular, Mongolians and Oirats who also chose to write their works in Tibetan and sometimes excelled to an extent to be recognized as Tibetans themselves. Tibetan was in fact very important in Mongolia. Thus B. Vladimirtsov noted that Tibetan is becoming very much like a second literary language for the Mongolians, being preferred to written Mongolian which is losing its importance [Vladimirtsov, 1925:51].

Sumba Khambo Eshe Paljor (sum pa mkhan po ye shes dpal ‘byor, 1704-1788), the famous Oirat scholar and lama, in his profound treatise “Pagsam-Jonsan” (Dpag bsam ljon bzang), relied on the evidence not only of the Tibetan sources, but also on Chinese and Oirat ones, showing a thorough knowledge of Central Asian historical canons. It was written, as indicated by the author, in the year of Earth-Dragon on the thirteenth rab-byung (i.e. in 1748), [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:6]. The four chapters of the work deal with the history of Buddhism in India (95 p.), in Tibet (192 p.), in China (12 p.)

¹⁴ “перевод Г. Хута оставляет желать лучшего”.

and in Mongolia (17 p.). Its second chapter, devoted to the history of Tibet and Buddhism of this country, as well as of its neighboring lands, was translated into Russian by R. Pubaev. Both the coverage and profound analysis of Sumba Khambo's book were the reasons why R. Pubaev characterized "Pagsam-Jonsan" as "the general history of the countries of the Southern, Central and Eastern Asia, while the connecting element for their 'unity' is Buddhism with its religious-philosophical doctrine and culture introduced and spread among them"¹⁵ [Pubaev, 1981:57].

Sumba Khambo's special approach to the sources he used consisted in their comparative analysis which helped to single out reliable facts and evidence of the events of the past. As the author of "Pagsam-Jonsan" himself notes: "There appears to have happened a mixture of Tibetan stories which are true with those which are not in some of the historical treatises"¹⁶ and that is why "it is more correct to make up (the chronology) in accordance with old historic treatises of Tibet and China..."¹⁷ [Pubaev, 1981:30-31]. Sumba Khambo also widely used his contemporaries' evidence. "The advantage of Sumba Khambo as a scholar

¹⁵ "как сводную историю стран Южной, Центральной и Восточной Азии, причем связующим звеном в этой "общности" служит возникновение и распространение буддизма, его религиозно-философской системы и культуры".

¹⁶ "Возможно, получилось так, что в некоторых исторических сочинениях смешались тибетские правильные и неправильные сказания".

¹⁷ "правильнее составлять (хронологию) в соответствии со старыми историческими сочинениями Китая и Тибета".

over his contemporaries consists in his use of absolutely new historic data”¹⁸ [Bira, 1960:33].

It should be noted that it was obviously beyond the scope of Sumba Khambo’s work to deal with the issue of how Buddhism was propagated among the Western Mongolians in detail. But when comparing his evidence of particular events that took place among the Oirats and Mongolians, with that of Tibet, a consistent picture is given of the close interactions and interdependence of the Buddhist history of the Mongolian people and the Tibetans.

The author of the treatise deals with Oirat Buddhist history since the late sixteenth century while focusing on the political history of the Mongolian nations. According to Sumba Khambo, Buddhism was in its prime because of the successful alliance between the 5th Dalai Lama and Gushi, the Khoshout Khan, against Ligdan, the Khan of the Chakhar-Mongolians, who was alleged to have attempted to destroy “the Yellow faith”. It is with pity that Sumba Khambo comments on the departure of Torgout (an Oirat clan) for Russia, the weakening of the Oirats’ position in the region in general and the loss of interest in Buddhism among them.

However, the treatise in question includes a number of facts which do not correspond to data accepted by scholars today. This is especially true as far as the interpretation of Mongolian-Tibetan relationships in the early thirteenth

¹⁸ “Именно в привлечении... совершенно новых исторических материалов заключается преимущество Сумба-Хамба как ученого перед его современниками”.

century is concerned. Thus, according to Sumba Khambo [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:74], in 1206 Genghis Khan conquered Central Tibet while it is known that in fact he went with his army to Tangut (Xi-Xia). One cannot agree either with another of the statements made by the author of “Pagsam-Jonsan” as he noted that it was in 1222, five years before Genghis-Khan’s death, when in Mongolia “the Buddhist religion was de-facto introduced”¹⁹ [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:76]. According to P. Pubaev, Sumba Khambo driven by his intention to idealize the Mongolian emperor, went so far as to distort historical facts and the chronologic scheme he had built himself [Pubaev, 1981:225].

This historical treatise was introduced to the scholarly community due to the research by V. Vasilyev and S.Ch. Das in the second half of the nineteenth century. Its importance for historical research has been pointed out by many famous scholars, including G. Tucci, S. Bira and L. Petech.

1.2. Mongolian and Other Sources

The Mongolian sources also include the evidence concerning the Buddhist history of Mongolia and especially that of Eastern Mongolia.

Despite the conflicts that occurred between the Western and Eastern Mongolians, lamas could travel from one part of the steppes to another. Their stories about what they had seen and heard, presented in oral and written forms, made up the basis of historical treatises where they included the data

¹⁹ “впервые в действительности была введена буддийская религия”.

about the social-cultural development of the Oirats as well. However, it should be pointed out at the very beginning of the present discussion that the presentation of the early history of the Buddhism of the Mongolian people in these sources is largely of a very general character. G. Tsibikoff pointed out that as far as the Mongolian stories dealing with the facts of the introduction of Buddhism are concerned, it should be noted that reliable evidence of the contemporaries of the events in question is absent [Tsibikoff, 1991, II:29].

One of the earliest samples of Mongolian writing is “The Secret History of the Mongols” [Kozin, 1941], which discusses the Oirats in detail. Here the story of how the empire was built by Genghis Khan and his allies is related alongside the thoughts concerning the fate of the people who became part of the empire.

It is most unfortunate that no works of the Mongolian historiography of the period between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries are available to us today. With the fall of the Yuan dynasty which marked one of the last stages of Genghis-Khan’s empire’s demise, there came a period of internal strife, especially in Mongolia itself; while the relationship between the Western Mongolians (Oirats) and Eastern Mongolians at the time was on the verge of open conflicts.

According to A. Pozdneev, since the late fourteenth century (Yuan dynasty’s fall) Eastern Mongolia had lost what was achieved by the ancestors and, in particular, Khalkha “appeared to have fallen asleep unable to ...any sort of

intellectual effort”²⁰ [Pozdneev, 1883:371]. In his opinion, the situation was no different as far as the Mongolians (the Chakhar and others) in the south were concerned. It was “similar to the Khalkha, their libraries lack any works representing the Yuan dynasty’s literary achievements which is, in its turn, a clear indication of the same lack of interest in literature in the south of Mongolia characteristic, as the evidence shows, of the north of the country”²¹ [Pozdneev, 1883:373].

In contrast to A. Pozdneev’s opinion, B. Vladimirtsov believed that the Mongolians were able, through the Dark Age in their history, to preserve much of their cultural heritage [Vladimirtsov, 1925:15]. At this point it seems appropriate to cite L. Puchkovsky who pointed out that the evidence of the absence of literature of the period under discussion should be wholly referred to the Mongolians’ level of knowledge of the Buddhist religious literature [Puchkovsky, 1953:139]. However, it may be added that L. Puchkovsky’s opinion cannot be referred to the Oirats and it will be shown below that they had translations of the important Buddhist works from Tibetan into Oirat (Mongolian) as early as the seventies of the sixteenth century. Thanks to a developed literary tradition of the past it was possible for them in the mid-seventeenth century to

²⁰ “как бы уснувшую для умственной жизни”.

²¹ “Подобно халхасам, они не сберегли в своих книгохранилищах ничего из совершенного в литературном отношении Юанями, и это, в свою очередь, ясно говорит о таком же падении интересов к литературе на юге Монголии, которое мы можем с достаточным основанием предполагать на севере”.

create “Todo Bichig”, the Western Mongolian writing system which later became popular with all Mongolian-language speaking nations.

According to B. Vladimirtsov [Vladimirtsov, 1920:99], from the late sixteenth century the Mongolian literature at large saw its period of Renaissance while S. Kozin referred this revival to an even earlier time [Kozin, 1940:57]. Due to the existence of the previous historical-literary tradition of the Mongolian nations, in the seventeenth century a number of historical works appeared where considerable attention was given to the history of the propagation of the Buddhist teaching among the Mongolian peoples and to a lesser degree among the Oirats.

One of the most famous chronicles of the time under discussion is “Erdeniin Tobchi”. Its exact title is “The Bejewelled Summary of the Origin of Khans” but it is better known in scholarship as Sagang Sechen’s “History of the Mongolians”. Sagang Sechen (1604-1662) was an outstanding member of the Khan’s clan in Ordos (Eastern Mongolia). He finished his work on the chronicle in the last year of his life [Puchkovsky, 1957:25]. The narration in “Erdeniin Tobchi” follows the canon which is, according to L. Puchkovsky [Puchkovsky, 1957:6], characteristic of almost all the Mongolian chronicles of the seventeenth century. Thus after a description of the history of the Indian kings who supported the spread of Buddhism (sometimes with an essay about the Universe preceding it) there follows a history of Tibetan kings and Mongolian khans under whose rule Buddhism came to flourish, with the genealogy of the

Mongolian khans beginning with Genghis Khan's ancestors. While relating the history of Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia, Sagang Sechen pays considerable attention to Kublai's rule and his patronage of Tibetan Buddhism. There is much focus on the history of how Buddhism was first introduced to the Eastern Mongolians and the story of its patronage on the part of Altan, the Khan of the Tumet as well as other Eastern Mongolians' Khans. There is little focus on the Oirats in Sagang Sechen's chronicle but he does give some detail however, when describing the strife between the Eastern and Western Mongolians.

The treatise under discussion was translated into German by Moravian missionary Isaac J. Schmidt in 1829 [Schmidt, 1829] which made it available to many scholars of Mongolian studies. Unfortunately, I.Y. Schmidt's uncritical treatment of the original resulted in a number of mistakes which were pointed out in historical works. But in view of tremendous piece of work made by Schmidt, no other scholar has ever had the courage "to endeavor and revise his work... which would require... to equal Schmidt in his patience and industry"²² [Laufer, 1927:41].

"Erdeniin Tobchi" recognized as a valuable source was used by many scholars in the field of Mongolian studies, including B. Vladimirtsov, S. Kozin, Sh. Bira and others [Vladimirtsov, 1934:17; Kozin, 1940:52-53; Bira, 1978:183]. According to Sh. Bira, Sagang Sechen has every right to be regarded as an

²² "отважился... равный Schmidt'у по терпению и выносливости... произвести ревизию его труда".

outstanding figure in the field of Mongolian historiography [Bira, 1978:249].

Of interest is the evidence about the Oirats of the period from Genghis Khan's time to late seventeenth century which can be found in "Shara Tuuji", another historical manuscript of the seventeenth century. Its full name is "The Great Yellow History of the Origin of Ancient Mongolian Khans" [Shara Tuuji, 1957]. Besides the information concerning the Genghisids, it also includes the data about the origin of the Oirat clans and their Khans. Thus first it deals with the Torgout beginning with Van Khan of the Kereit to Ayuka Khan (1646-1724), then with the Khoit, Choros and Khoshout. In some of its parts the treatise repeats "Erdeniin Tobchi".

The sources for the treatises under consideration were those transmitted by way of oral word such as clan histories of the representatives of aristocratic families, family legends associated with them or memories of the events of which they were participants, ethnic narratives, folklore and others. These works are characterized by their stress on the role of khans in the promotion of Buddhism, thus they are glorified by the authors who use the title "Raja (Khan)-Chakravartin" while relating, in particular, about Kublai Khan and Altan Khan.

The seventeenth century chronicles have been used by all scholars in their study of medieval Mongolia. B. Vladimirtsov, for example, was of high opinion about them pointing out that they include genres of various kinds such as Buddhist prayers, Buddhist treatises, astrology works,

chronicles and legends [Vladimirtsov, 1920:90-91]. Thanks to this syncretism of theirs the Mongolian chroniclers were able to narrate in terms of the canon of poetic diction on such 'prosaic' subjects as political, scientific matters and the so called officialese [Kozin, 1940:26].

Among the works of Mongolian authors of later periods the issue of the Buddhist tradition of the Mongolian peoples is dealt with in the work of the eighteenth century titled "Dzhiruken Tolain Tailburi" [Baldanzhapov, 1962], which includes the information of special interest for the present discussion concerning the influence of the Tshal Tibetan Buddhist School at Kublai's court.

Another source used in the present research is the chronicle titled "Erdeniin Erikhe" translated by Alexei M. Pozdneev [Pozdneev, 1883]. Its author is a certain Galdan known also as Galdan-tusalagchi who lived in the nineteenth century. "Erdeniyin Erikhe" is dated back to the sixties of the nineteenth century on the basis of the reference made in the treatise to Syn-fin, the Chinese emperor (1851-1861) [Puchkovsky, 1957:71]. The chronicle covers the period of Mongolian general history up to the mid-nineteenth century dealing briefly with the propagation of Buddhism during the Yuan period. There is only a general sketch devoted to the Oirats in the work. Still, it is a pity this chronicle of Mongolian history is very rarely referred to by the scholars, while it is only here that one can find the evidence of the presence of Buddhist monks among the Oirats in the mid-sixteenth century.

The well-known Mongolian historian and lama Lobsan Damdin (blo bzang rta mgrim, 1867-1937), also known as Zava Damdin (rtsa ba rta mgrim), has written “The Sweet Sound of the Shell” [Blo bzang rta mgrim], where he shortly discussed the periods of Buddhism’s spread among Mongolian peoples. For us this work is important for its search of the first Buddhist priests in Mongolian steppe, who were the Uyghur monks.

The data concerning the Oirats from the Arab-Persian chronicles are included into the famous “Compendium of Chronicles” written in Farsi by Rashid-al-Din, the Persian historian of early fourteenth century [Rashid-al-Din, 1946; 1952; 1960]. In the opinion of reputed scholars, the “Compendium of Chronicles” is in fact a vast encyclopedia of history [Barthold, 1963, I:168], in which the author “succeeded in giving a picture of the nomadic everyday way of life of the Mongolian clans amazing in its detailed treatment of the subject”²³ [Vladimirtsov, 1934:6]. Of special importance for the present research is its unique data on the settlements of the Oirats, their ethnic character, and their early beliefs, as well as the fragmentary evidence of the Iranian period in Oirat history.

The Armenian historian of the thirteenth century Kirakos Gandzaketi is the author of “History of Armenia” where he described the events taking place in Transcaucasia, Middle East and Armenia on the eve of the Mongolian invasion in the region and during this invasion from the point of view of

²³ “удалось дать замечательную по своим подробностям картину кочевого быта монгольских племен”.

an eyewitness of the majority of these events [Gandzaketi Kirakos, 1976]. This unique piece of historiography is regarded, with every right, as a first class source on the medieval history of the area. Another important source is "The World History" of Vardan Areveltsi, who is known also as Vardan the Great, and lived in the thirteenth century. He was known as a historian, geographer and public figure. His famous work "The World History" was probably completed by him in the 1260's [Vardan the Great].

The monograph under discussion relies, in particular, on the famous work by the Chinese scholar Khe-tsyu-tao titled "Men-gu-yu-mu-tsi"; (or, "Memoirs of the Mongol Encampments") which includes evidence of interest for the present discussion concerning the Mongolian clans, including the Oirats. It was published in 1867 and translated into Russian in 1895 by P. Popov [Men-gu-yu-mu-tsi, 1895]. This work is of importance as it also contains rare data taken from Chinese imperial archives and, in particular, it deals with the history of the Mongolian people and the settlement pattern of some of Oirat clans.

1.3. Oirat Sources

The Oirat sources are a special group among others used for the present work. It should be pointed out that so far they have not been practically discussed along the lines of the present research. Though the earliest of them we have today dates to the eighteenth century, there is every reason to believe that works of this kind existed among the Oirats in

earlier times as well, indicated by the references to them made by the authors of later periods.

Of considerable importance among the Oirat sources of the present research is the Oirat monk Neiji Toin's biography. The full title of the treatise is "Bogda Neyici-toyin dalai Manjusri-yin domog-i todorqay-a geyigulugci cindamani erike kemeg-deku orosiba" (or, "[The Book], titled "Chindamani Prayer Beads", giving a clear history of bogdo Neidji toin Dalai Manjushri"). It is also known under its shorter title of "Chindamani Erike – Neiji Toin's Biography". Ts. Purbueva, whose translation was used in the present research, writes that the information about the author's name (Prajnya Sagara) and its sources is given in the colophon of the "Biography" [Purbueva, 1984:9]. Sagara based his work on written records (chiefly by Neiji Toin's disciples) and oral stories about him; it is also indicated in the colophon that the work was written in the yellow sheep year which corresponds to 1739. Neiji Toin was a Torgout Khan's son who made his fame thanks to his missionary work in the pasture lands of Eastern Mongolian clans of Khorchin, Onnyut, Durbet and Jalyte. He was also involved in translation activity and his works were referred to by K. Golstunsky [Golstunsky, 1880:73-78] and B. Vladimirtsov [Vladimirtsov, 1920:90-115] among other scholars.

Another important piece of the Oirat hagiographic literature, which is of special interest for the present book, is "Zaya Pandit's Biography" ("Ram byam Za-ya pandidayin tuuji sarayin gerel kemeku orosiba"), which is also known under its shorter title "Sarin Gerel", i.e. "The Moon's Light". Its

author is Ratnabhadra, one of Zaya Pandita's disciples, whose dates of life as well as biography are unknown. The work was written in 1691 and its sources are not indicated which means that Ratnabhadra relied only on his own memory and impressions.

As indicated by its title the text is devoted to the life and work of Zaya Pandit Okturquin Dalai, the famous Oirat lama who belonged to the Khoit Clan. It also deals briefly with the history of the Oirats throughout the seventeenth century. On the background of an outline of the spread of the Geluk teaching among the Mongolian people the work relates the beginning of a new life of a future great preacher when the youth was adopted by Baibagas Batur, the Khoshout Khan, and sent to Tibet for his education. After many years of his study Zaya Pandit is involved in the propagation and promotion of the "Yellow faith" among the Mongolians and Oirats, as well as in translation activity and other educational work. Thus he became the founder of the Oirat writing system (1648) and the list of his translations from Tibetan and Sanskrit is cited by Ratnabhadra. The narration is concluded with the description of the search for his reincarnation to be found among Tibetans (Tangut, according to the text). The boy was taken to Lhasa to be educated there.

A. Badmaev mentions about the Russian translations of the work made by Y. Litkin and D. Rinchen [Badmaev, 1969:11]. The first Russian translation of "Zaya Pandit's Biography" was published in 1969 [Zaya Pandit's Biography, 1969:159-200] and since then it has become one of the sources in active use by scholars of Mongolian and Kalmyk

studies. In 1999 in Elista, the translation of the book titled “Zaya Pandit (Biography Materials)” written by Sh. Norbo, the Sinkiang Oirat (Karashar Torgout) was published. The book first came out in Classic Mongolian in Inner Mongolia (the People’s Republic of China) in 1990. It was “the first complete edition of the text of “Zaya Pandit’s Biography” with numerous commentaries made by Sh. Norbo promoting a better understanding of the core of its content”²⁴ [Norbo, 1999:8]. Zaya Pandit’s personality, who gave his people their writing form, has always been the focus of attention of Orientalists.

Of interest are works (mostly historical treatises such as “History of the Derben Oirat” and “History of the Oirats”) which were discovered by G. Litkin, the reputed scholar in the field of Kalmyk studies, in the Kalmyk nobleman’s library whose name was Tseren-Djab Tyumen. Relying on these texts, as well as other known data in the field, Litkin wrote his own work titled “Materials on the Oirat History” which is an important source, according to A. Badmaev [Badmaev, 1969:6].

Gaban Sharab’s text has no title given to it by the author himself but it has become widely known as “History of the Oirats”, or “Oyirad-yin tuuji”. All we know about the author is that Gaban Sharab was an emchi (medical man), belonged to a noble family and held a high position in the society. It is also known that “History of the Oirats” was written in 1737

²⁴ “впервые был издан сводный текст ‘Биографии Зая-пандиты’ и помещены многочисленные комментарии самого Ш. Норбо, помогающие лучше понять суть описываемого в ней”.

[Badmaev, 1984:64]. The author did not indicate the sources he made use of in his text which is divided into parts dealing with the origin of the Oirat nobility, the separation between the Mongolians and the Oirats, etc. He was of an opinion that Buddhism started to gain its influence among the Oirats under Sain Tenes Mergen, the Torgout Khan in the early seventeenth century. Of exceptional importance is Gaban Sharab's data concerning the family histories of Torgout, Khoshout and Dzungar nobility, as well as other information, in particular about the Oirat-Mongolian Meeting of 1640. Gaban Sharab's treatise was meant to be an instruction of a mentor as he had written his work so that "the Oirats who had separated did not forget about the worthy deeds of the old time nobility"²⁵ and hoped that his tales "will be of use to young children as well"²⁶.

Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, the author of "History of the Derben Oirat, Written down by Noyon Batur-Ubushi Tyumen" (shortly – "History of the Derben Oirat" or "Derben oyirad-yin tuuji") belonged to the top of the Kalmyk society. The work in fact was started by Tyumen Jirgal, his father, while Batur-Ubushi completed it. The treatise includes almost the same data as Gaban Sharab's work but there are also quite considerable differences. Thus Batur-Ubushi Tyumen's work gives more detail concerning the Khoit and Derbet, and includes the most important chronological data of Oirat history. "History of the Derben Oirat" was published several times by A. Pozdneev [Pozdneev 1885; 1915].

²⁵ "чтобы отделившиеся ойраты не забывали о делах и поступках нойонов старого времени".

²⁶ "принесут пользу и малым детям".

The importance of the two works mentioned above for the historical studies was highly esteemed by the scholarly community. Thus I. Zlatkin pointed out that the author of “History of the Oirats” intentionally did not include those events of the Oirat history into his narration which could not be confirmed with evidence. This fact contributes further to the importance of the work as one of the sources of the Oirat history [Zlatkin, 1983:9]. The same comment was made by the scholars concerning Batur-Ubushi Tyumen’s treatise [Zlatkin, 1983:9; Badmaev, 1984:90].

It should be noted here that there is an obvious difference of the Kalmyk works from Mongolian ones. Thus the former do not have an introduction relating about the creation of the universe, neither do they have any reference to the Indian or Tibetan origin of their khans. The Kalmyk authors are characterized by a more critical treatment of the materials which, undoubtedly, contributes to their relevance as historical sources. Besides they do not practically include any poetry and have very few literary passages.

However, as I. Zlatkin pointed out, “the mentioned Kalmyk sources have not been practically used so far in the Russian literature on the history of the Mongolians and Oirats, let alone foreign historiography”²⁷ [Zlatkin, 1983:7]. Even today the situation has not changed much as far as foreign scholars are concerned while in Russian historiography the Oirat and Kalmyk sources have found their way and are in active use in

²⁷ “Указанные калмыцкие источники в русской и тем более зарубежной литературе по истории монголов и ойратов до настоящего времени почти не использовались”.

Mongolian studies. For instance, the present work is also based on A. Badmaev's translations of "Zaya Pandit's Biography", "History of the Oirats" and "A History of the Derben Oirat", as well as Sh. Norbo's book discussed above.

It should also be added that there is evidence of great interest and relevance concerning the Buddhism of the Kalmyks who used to migrate within the Russian borders, as well as the Buddhism of the Oirats of Central Asia, in the period of early seventeenth century and onwards, which is to be found in the Russian archives of Elista, Saint Petersburg, Moscow and others. Thus while dealing with the issue of shamanism of the Kalmyks and the Oirats, as well as the role of the Altai lamas among Kalmyks, the author of the present monograph made use of archival materials stored in the National Archive of the Kalmyk Republic (NA KR).

By way of concluding I would like to point out that the list of sources which may be of importance and relevance in covering the subject under discussion is not limited to those discussed above. The author could not use those which were unavailable for various reasons as well as those which had no information on the issues of particular interest for the present research.

CHAPTER II. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Russian Literature

The Oirats' active participation in the political, economic and cultural life of Central Asia has ensured their steady connection with the people of the region, as well as the interest of scholars in these Western Mongolian clans. The Oirats are thus to a greater or lesser extent touched upon in the works of scholars in the fields of Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese and Turkic studies.

Of great importance are the materials in books of famous scholars as A. Pozdneev and G. Tsybikoff. A wide use of the data from the original primary sources and of the evidence based on field work makes these works especially relevant.

A more thorough study of Mongolian Buddhism is represented in his other book "Essays of the Everyday Life of Buddhist Monasteries and Buddhist Clergy of Mongolia" [Pozdneev, 1991] which also includes data relevant to the history of the Oiratian Buddhism. A. Pozdneev was in fact the first of the Russian scholars who paid attention to specific features characteristic of Buddhism of the Oirats and tried to give an explanation of these. Of certain interest are Pozdneev's comments which he made as the translator of

the treatise by Baza Bakshi, the Kalmyk lama, which was published in 1897. Baza Bakshi travelled to Tibet in the late nineteenth century and while writing his book tried to combine the data known about Tibet at the time with what he witnessed himself.

The issues of the early history of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people were touched upon by G. Tsybikoff in several of his works and namely in his book “A Buddhist Pilgrim at the Shrines of Tibet” and in a number of his articles [Tsybikoff, 1991], which are still of relevance nowadays [Tsybikoff, 1991, II:5]. His observations about the influence of Uyghur and Tangut Buddhism on Mongolians, as well as the importance of the Geluk School are worth considering.

G. Tsybikoff’s works are not free of certain lapses which are still encountered in some historical papers even today such as, for example, when he mistakenly referred the Sarpa Schools (gsar pa — new tradition) including the Sakya, Kagyu, etc to a group of the Nyingma School (mying ma — old tradition) [Tsybikoff, 1991: I:105]. But despite such shortcomings G. Tsybikoff’s work has not lost “its scientific relevance for modern Tibetan studies”²⁸ [Tsybikoff, 1991: I:13], “it is still of interest as a first hand information source on the life of the Tibetan clergy and that of Buddhist pilgrims in Tibet”²⁹ [Tsybikoff, 1991: I:30].

²⁸ “своего научного значения для современной тибетологии”.

²⁹ “сохранила весь свой интерес непосредственностью наблюдений жизни тибетского монашества и жизни буддийских паломников в Тибете”.

An attempt to draw a more or less complete picture of the spread of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people based on the textological analysis of the Mongolian primary sources was made by B. Vladimirtsov. It is not his capital work “The Social Organization of the Mongols. Mongolian Nomadic Feudalism”, which is meant here but such works such as “Buddhism in Tibet and Mongolia” and “The Mongolian Literature” [Vladimirtsov, 1919; 1920] among others. These were in fact the first works in Russian historiography that dealt with the history of the introduction and spread of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism both in Tibet itself and in Mongolia. B. Vladimirtsov elaborated his idea that the Mongolian people had been acquainted with (Uyghur) Buddhism even before the era of Genghis Khan and he also wrote about the reasons which determined the predominance of the Geluk School among them.

A similar opinion was held by S. Kozin in his works. Even if the issue of the methodological fallacy of applying the framework of the social organization of European feudalism to that of medieval Central Asia is disregarded, still, the weakness of B. Vladimirtsov’s theoretical propositions is obvious and can also be seen in their factual basis, which is not complete enough for the conclusions made. The point is that the main ideas of the works under consideration were not supported by the analysis of Tibetan primary sources as the author tended to rely largely on Mongolian ones. Nevertheless, one cannot deny B. Vladimirtsov’s and S. Kozin’s achievements in Tibetan and Mongolian studies, as well as the importance of their works. And here it should be

pointed out that these dealt with the Buddhism of the Mongolian-language speaking people - not as a phenomenon isolated from the cultural life in Central Asia but as one closely linked with it.

The sixties and seventies of last century were quite important for Mongolian studies as they saw a number of works published which were specifically concerned with the Oirats as a group whose ethnic identity was regarded as different from that of the Mongolians, and who had their own history and culture. Besides, these works were largely based on the archeological and ethnographic data, as well as on the evidence of primary sources on Buddhism of the Mongolian people. Of importance among the works of this period in the Oirat studies was the publication of the book by I. Zlatkin on the history of Dzungar Khanate [Zlatkin, 1983], where the author gave an overview of all the available materials and archival documents on the Oirats of Dzungar period, primarily those in the Russian language. The author also dealt with the issue of the introduction and establishment of the Geluk School among the Oirats, holding the view that it happened only after this School of Tibetan Buddhism was accepted by the Eastern Mongolians. I. Zlatkin practically made no use of Tibetan primary sources which finally explains his somewhat narrow conclusions as far as the history of Buddhism among the Oirats is concerned.

N. Zhukovskaya's works deal with early religious beliefs of Mongolians and their combination with Tibetan Buddhism; she is also concerned with the historical issues of the pantheon and ritual formation in Mongolian Buddhism

[Zhukovskaya, 1977]. The author also focuses her attention on the spread of the Geluk teaching's among the Eastern Mongolians extending some of her conclusions on the Oirats as well.

In “The Mongolian Primary Sources about Dayan-Khan” G. Gorokhova [Gorokhova, 1986] studies one of the most complex and vague periods in the history of the Eastern and Western Mongolians – that of the fifteenth century. The important evidence concerning the Mongolian rulers taking turns on the throne and the Oirats’ pan-Mongolian ambitions at the time gives a clear picture of the causes which determined the strife between the Mongolians and Oirats in the fifteenth century and later. It was beyond the scope of G. Gorokhova’s study to deal with the history of Buddhism in Mongolia but it seems if it had been included, this kind of material could have contributed to this interesting book as additional data and further evidence. Though her other earlier study [Gorokhova, 1980] concentrates on the history of the Eastern Mongolians from the late eighteenth century onwards, it touches to a certain extent upon the issues of the cultural and religious life of the Mongolian society of an earlier period as well.

The political history of the Eastern and Western Mongolians is the subject of the articles by Sh. Chimitdorzhiev [Chimitdorzhiev, 1980; 1989]. Investigating the military campaigns of Gushi Khan against Choghtu Taiji in the thirties of the seventeenth century, Sh. Chimitdorzhiev tried to explore the reasons for the alliance made by Choghtu Taiji with Lingdan, the Khan of the Chakhar, against the Geluk

School. Relying on insufficient evidence and proceeding in fact only from the political situation as it was at the time in Mongolia itself, the author jumps to the conclusion that it was the pro-Manchu strategy of the Geluk which determined the character of the given Mongolian Khans' attitude to the School. This conclusion seems to be unwarranted. In fact, the Oirats who supported this Buddhist School also "pursued an open anti-Manchu policy"³⁰ [Dandaron, 1972:12], while according to Chimitdorzhiev, they posed as nothing but the Manchu allies.

The religious interests of Tibet intertwined with the political ambitions of the Ming and Qing dynasties are the focus of attention in Ts. Purbueva's [Purbueva, 1984] and Tatyana D. Skrinnikova's [Skrinnikova, 1988] studies. The authors investigated one of the most important and complex periods in the history of the spread of the Buddhist Geluk School among the Mongolian-language speaking peoples and examined the reasons which determined the large scope and considerable degree of influence exerted by Buddhism on the masses of ordinary people. For the first time in the Russian historiography Ts. Purbueva took up the study of the famous Lama Neiji Toin's (1557-1653) biography who was the founder of Tibetan "Yellow Hat" Buddhism among the Mongolian peoples, concentrating on his activities in the Eastern Mongolia. T. Skrinnikova, in her turn, carried out a thorough investigation of the well-known concept of the "Two Laws" (Tib. lugs gnyis; Mong. goyar yosun), i.e. the unity of the secular and religious powers in a state, making

³⁰ "проводили резко выраженную антиманьчжурскую политику".

the conclusion that the concept was of considerable importance for the development of the statehood of the Mongolian people [Skrinnikova, 1988:12-17].

Both Ts. Purbueva and T. Skrinnikova are very careful in their approach to the issue of the existence of Buddhism among the Mongolians in the post-Yuan period, as well as the attribution of the period of the spread of the Geluk teachings. According to T. Skrinnikova, Buddhism did not cease to exist and that is why “when we point out at its revival among the Mongolians in the sixteenth century we mean in the first place its revival as a state religion with an infrastructure built to ensure its dominance”³¹ [Skrinnikova, 1988:21-22]. Ts. Purbueva singled out the period from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries as the most probable time when the Geluk teachings began to spread in Mongolia [Purbueva, 1984:22]. The issue of Buddhism among the Oirats has been practically left out in their discussion, though T. Skrinnikova, while pointing out that after the fall of the Yuan dynasty the Buddhist monks were among the visitors to the court of the Mongolian Khans, mentioned in fact only the names of the Oirat Khans [Skrinnikova, 1988:20].

In the early nineties last century there were a number of interesting articles published by G. Galdanova [Galdanova, 1992] and T. Mikhailov [Mikhailov, 1993], dealing with the religious and ethnic issues of the Mongolian people in the early Middle Ages. In the late nineties works of the general

³¹ “когда мы говорим о возрождении буддизма у монголов в XVI веке, то имеем ввиду прежде всего восстановление его в качестве государственной религии с созданием аппарата, способного обеспечить ее господство”.

character were also published dealing with the history of Buddhism of the Oirats to some extent.

It seems appropriate here to present a survey of Kalmyk scholars' works as a separate group as it is in Kalmykia where the main body of the Oirat primary sources is kept and accordingly the local scholars heavily rely on them in contrast to other researchers.

In Kalmykia three issues of collected articles were published which deal with Buddhism among the Oirats and Kalmyks: "Lamaism in Kalmykia" [Lamaism, 1977], "Lamaism in Kalmykia and the Issues of Scientific Atheism" [Lamaism, 1980] and "The Issues of Lamaist History in Kalmykia" [The Issues, 1987]. In books the study of the history of Buddhism among the Oirats starts only with the first half of the seventeenth century, i.e. with the period of the Geluk School's dominance. As a rule, no earlier period is considered in the papers except for a short article by G. Dordzhieva [Dordzhieva, 1977]. The author begins her discussion with the time when Buddhism spread from India to Tibet and then briefly describes the spread of Buddhism among the Oirats and Kalmyks up to the mid-eighteenth century. Of course, this condensed manner of description resulted in a very general treatment of the issue under consideration. V. Sanchirov's article deals with the Gushi Khan's military campaigns in Tibet [Sanchirov, 1977]. The author points out that "in Dzungaria Lamaism in the form of the "Yellow Hat" teaching was firmly established from the very beginning"³² [Sanchirov, 1977:18], but provides no

³² "в Джунгарии... с самого начала прочно утвердился ламаизм в

arguments to support his conclusion. On the whole the article presents a complete enough description of the details and consequences of the invasion of Tibet by Gushi Khan of the Khoshout in late thirties and early forties of the seventeenth century.

The long-standing opinion that the Oirats and Kalmyks were followers solely of the Geluk School was first questioned by S. Batyreva. In her article she dealt with the dominance of the Sakya School among the Mongolian peoples in the thirteenth century and also provided the evidence of the “Red Hat” Buddhism among the Kalmyks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries [Batyreva, 1985, p. 68].

A detailed discussion of the issue in question was taken up by E. Bakaeva, another Kalmyk researcher [Bakaeva, 1989]. Having pointed out the idea of a parallel existence of the Geluk and Sakya in the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, E. Bakaeva makes the conclusion about two stages of Buddhism among Oirats; the first one of the thirteenth century and the second one of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries [Bakaeva, 1989:77]. Summing up her discussion, the author of the article points out that even in later periods despite the dominance of the Geluk School, the Sakya had its followers among the Western Mongolians. Thus trying to identify a particular lineage of the lamas of the “Red Hat” Buddhism who continued to preach among the Kalmyks up to the twentieth century, Bakaeva finally makes a conclusion that they adhered to the Sakya School, arguing that the tradition was

форме учения “желтошапочников”.

dominant among the Mongolians of the thirteenth century. However, one cannot agree with this kind of argumentation. In her monograph E. Bakaeva once more deals with the same periods in the history of Buddhism of the Oirats and argues for the same role of the Sakya School among the Oirats [Bakaeva, 1994].

The articles and books published in the following years by the scholars of the Oirat and Kalmyk studies dealt to a certain extent with the history of Buddhism of the Oirats but mainly they were relevant for the period after seventeen century [Kurapov, 2007].

Meanwhile the importance of the issue of the spread of Tibetan Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking people was obvious and it required further effort on the part of scholars first of all by way of using the data of Tibetan historical tradition. Such famous scholars as A. Vostrikov and Y. Roerich started the research along these lines elaborating on its particular aspects.

A. Vostrikov carried out an immense piece of work on the systematization of all the available Tibetan primary sources, identifying the time and circumstances of their writing and publication [Vostrikov, 1962]. Thus he analyzed the sources which were used as the basis of “The Red Annals”, which we mentioned above. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the main objective of his work which consisted in giving a complete and reasonable survey of Tibetan primary sources as well as of those in the Tibetan language was effectively realized by him, though there is no doubt that the work of this kind needs to be continued and elaborated. One cannot

overestimate the importance of A. Vostrikov's contribution to the studies of Tibetan historical writings. Indeed no contemporary study of the history, culture or even linguistic matters concerning Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism at large can do without this fundamental work.

One of the first of his works in which Yuri N. Roerich examined the issue of Buddhism of the Mongolian people and gave a thorough analysis of Tibetan primary sources was his article "Mongolian-Tibetan Interactions in XIII and XIV c." [Roerich, 1958]. Then his next article "Mongolian-Tibetan Interactions in XVI and Early XVII c." followed [Roerich, 1959]. Underlying the exceptional importance of such primary sources as Kunga Dorje's "The Red Annals" and "Buddhist Transmission History" by Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa for the study of Tibetan Buddhism, Y. Roerich was one of the first Russian scholars to point out that, besides the well-known Sakya, schools such as the Taglun and Drikung also had a considerable influence in Tibet in the Middle Age [Roerich, 1958:334, 337]. Credit is also due to him for his pointing out a significant influence that the Tshal School had in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries [Roerich, 1958: 345]. As far as the issue of attributing the spread of the Geluk School among the Eastern Mongolians was concerned, Yuri N. Roerich referred it to an earlier period [Roerich, 1959:193-195], earlier than the year 1578 accepted by most scholars as the turning point.

Y. Roerich's works played a great role as their publication was followed by a lively interest in the study of Buddhism of the Mongolian-language speaking peoples while many of the

scholars who took up the study of the history of Buddhism in the Middle Age Central Asia were greatly influenced by them. To this day the relevance of his articles has not been diminished.

Of interest are also articles published by R. Dugarov, the Tibetologist [Dugarov, 1983; 1989]. In one of these the author examines in detail the course of Genghis-Khan's first introduction to Tibetan Buddhism [Dugarov, 1989:28], pointing out to the particular historic figures involved in the process. In his article "On Soko-Sadja Khoshout and their Relationships with Tibetan Tribes in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" [Dugarov, 1983] R. Dugarov deals with the political and cultural life of the Khoshouts who built an independent state in the north of Tibet, as well as their interactions with neighboring tribes playing quite a considerable role in the system of Tibetan-Mongolian relationships, namely the Arig and Chjakhor (or, Monguor). He is perhaps one of the first historians to come to the conclusion about the existence of the Khoshout state by Kukunor Lake in the period from the thirties of the seventeenth century to the forties of the eighteenth century on the basis of his analysis of the original primary sources. Recently he has published a comprehensive work on the history and culture of Amdo which also includes Kukunor region [Dugarov, 1995].

Obviously, in modern Tibetan and Mongolian studies there are far more questions to answer than those which have been answered as far as the spread and establishment of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking peoples are

concerned. This can be primarily accounted for by the fact that neither the analysis of rather scarce evidence of the well-known primary sources on the issue under consideration nor their interpretation by the authors of later treatises have resulted in the conclusions satisfactory to most scholars. Thus the data of various primary sources cannot be often agreed upon either because of the fragmentary nature of some of them or their loose interpretations in others. Therefore there is an urgent need for a thorough analysis and critical reading of such sources which may be regarded as a kind of fundamental “encyclopedia” of the history of Tibet and its bordering countries in terms of their scope and importance. That is why it seems both logical and promising that R. Pubaev, the reputed Tibetologist, embarked on the study of such an important primary source of Tibetan historical thought as “Pagsam-Jonsan” by Sumba Khambo.

In his monograph and articles [Pubaev, 1981; 1989] Regbi Y. Pubaev gives a most thorough and comprehensive analysis not only of “Pagsam-Jonsan” by Sumba Khambo, the object of his investigation, but also of all the other Tibetan sources which were either used in writing the treatise or were helpful in clarifying its particular passages. R. Pubaev’s commentaries made to all the names, events and dates abound in “Pagsam-Jonsan” which are given in a compressed, concise and laconic way represent a model piece of academic work as it is based on an elaborate examination of this remarkable source, offers a most reserved and reasonable interpretation of its content and takes into account the previous researchers’ works.

The Russian (as well as the world) academic community became acquainted with the first detailed data about the Oirats in the works by Chinese authors thanks to their translations made by famous Russian Sinologists such as N. Bichurin [Bichurin, 1991], V. Vasiliyev [Vasiliyev, 1857] and D. Pokotilov [Pokotilov, 1893]. Their works include a considerable amount of facts concerning the political life of the Oirats during the Ming dynasty as well as some data on the early history of the Mongolian-language speaking tribes by the time of their subjugation by Genghis-khan. Thus in particular D. Pokotilov carried out a most difficult task of comparing Mongolian and Chinese names; he also included some data on the history of Buddhism of Mongolian people.

The general level of the historical scholarship of the time when these scholars lived and worked may account for a number of wrong conclusions made in their works. Thus while analyzing “A Historical Survey of the Oirats, or Kalmyks, from XV Century to the Present Time”, the famous work by N. Bichurin [Bichurin, 1991], B. Vladimirtsov pointed out that “it abounded with fallacies and mistakes”³³ which resulted in “many wrong conclusions made about the Oirats”³⁴ [Vladimirtsov, 1934:157].

In the article by S. Kuchera [1970], a Sinologist, special attention is given to the study of Mongolian-Tibetan relations in the imperial epoch, as well as to the spread of Buddhism among the Mongolian peoples. The work is of interest but the issue under study, as formulated in the article, requires the

³³ “кишащую источными и ошибочными указаниями”.

³⁴ “многие совершенно неверные взгляды на ойратов”.

analysis of Tibetan sources themselves which the author has not undertaken. The same criticism can be made about I. Petrushevsky's [Petrushevsky, 1970] and L. Gumilyov's [Gumilyov, 1970] articles dealing with the issues of Tibetan studies.

The history and culture of Tibet is the main subject of collaborative work by Y. Kichanov and L. Savitsky [Kichanov, Savitsky, 1975] which has both academic and artistic merits. It is based on a comprehensive study of Tibetan and Chinese primary sources which allows the authors to give a complete picture of the level and character of Tibetan-Mongolian interactions throughout the Middle Ages, including the establishment of the Geluk School as the dominant one in Tibet and Mongolia. Unfortunately, this book follows many others as it draws no distinctive line between the Western and Eastern Mongolians.

Nowadays a study of the Oirats based on the analysis of Chinese primary sources has been undertaken by A. Chernishev, the Sinologist [Chernishev, 1987; 1990]. Pointing out in his works that "the history of the Western Mongolians...has not attracted much attention on the part of the scholars, especially the Soviet researchers"³⁵ the scholar undertakes "the reconstruction of a general picture of the Oirat history during the Ming dynasty"³⁶ [Chernishev, 1990:17], that is the period of their history before the Oirat Dzungar state was founded. The author uses original Chinese

³⁵ "судьба западных монголов... не привлекала к себе достаточного внимания исследователей, особенно советских".

³⁶ "реконструировать в общем плане историю ойратов в эпоху Мин".

primary sources, as well as those translated from Mongolian and Turkic languages. Of special interest in his book are the data of the Chinese authors concerning the ethnic identification of the Oirats and Mongolians, as well as some specific facts about the role of the clergy among the Oirats.

The progress of Russian scholarship in the field of Tibetan Buddhist studies was associated with further elaboration and expansion of particular knowledge concerning the political, economic and social history of Central Asia. Thus alongside a number of articles and other materials dealing with specific questions of the history of the Mongolian peoples there appeared also larger works and monographs devoted to broader and comprehensive subjects.

In V. Bartold's exceptionally broad academic heritage the issues of the history of Mongolian nations took quite a considerable place. With an objective to sum up all the works of his predecessors in the academic field concerning the Mongolian and Turkic nations of the imperial epoch and on the basis of this critical survey to build his own theory of the history of these nations in the period in question, V. Bartold analyzed and made use of all kinds of sources including historical, literary, linguistic and others. In his works such as "A History of The Cultural Life in Turkistan" and "Turkistan of the Epoch of the Mongol Invasion" and others [Bartold, 1963-1968], the scholar made his conclusions relying mostly on Turkic (Arabian) sources. V. Bartold most of the time did not differentiate between the Eastern and Western Mongolians and that is why while dealing with the Oirats in his works he was especially careful in his arguments. Thus,

for example, dealing with the issue of the spread and establishment of Buddhism among the Oirats he avoided attributing the beginning of this process, pointing out only that “the Khurultai of 1640 confirmed the dominance of Buddhism among all the Kalmyk affiliations”³⁷ [Bartold, 1968, V:539].

Unfortunately, V. Bartold practically did not use any of Tibetan primary sources. But one cannot of course question numerous values of his works which abound in documentary materials and are very clear and consistent in dealing with the complex issues of the history of Mongolian tribes. They also demonstrate the scholar’s expertise in analyzing and interpreting the data of the sources involved, as well as in dealing with the most difficult questions of the social organization and culture of the Mongolians. Thus it may be concluded that V. Bartold’s works stand out as cornerstones in the study of the history of medieval Central Asia.

2.2. Foreign Literature

A number of academic works of famous foreign centers (for example, in the UK, USA, in European and Asian states) of Mongolian and Buddhist studies also deal with the issues of Buddhism of the Oirats. It should be noted that, generally speaking, it is characteristic of these centers to follow the same stages in the study of the religious aspect of the Mongolians and Oirats as they started with the publications

³⁷ “курултай 1640 г...прочно утвердил у всех ветвей калмыков господство буддизма”.

dealing alongside a brief description of the sources (mostly unknown at the time) with the issues of general political and ethnic history and then went on to publish specific articles and monographs on Buddhism of the Mongolians.

Obviously, our discussion should start with the Mongolian and only then with the Chinese historiography. In Mongolia and China there are a considerable number of works dealing to a certain extent with the history of the Buddhism of the Oirats. While books by Mongolian authors are taken into some account in the Russian Oriental studies, those by Chinese authors are practically out of reach.

Among the works by Mongolian authors that the present monograph relies on, Sh. Bira's works stand out. He was one of the first scholars to pay most serious attention to the works by Sumba Khambor. He gave analysis of "Pagsam-Jonsan" and Sumba Khambo's correspondence with the outstanding figures of Tibetan Buddhism, and studied other Buddhist works in the Tibetan language [Bira, 1960]. Sh. Bira is recognized as one of famous Tibetologists, like, for example, Sarat Chandra Das or G. Tucci. One of the sources of the present monograph is also "On the 'Golden Book' by Sh. Damdin" [Bira, 1964], another important work by S. Bira.

The specific feature of "The Golden Book" is that its author, Sh. Damdin, began his story in fact with the history of early Turkic-Mongolian tribes who lived on the territory of Mongolia in ancient times. Sh. Bira gives a thorough examination of the history of Buddhism in Mongolia, the main subject of the Mongolian lama's treatise as well, who divided it into three periods: early, middle and late.

According to Damdin, the early period began even before Buddhism was introduced into China and Tibet [Bira, 1964:23, 31], the middle period began with Genghis Khan and the late period started with the meeting of Sodnam Gyatso and Altan-khan, that is in the second half of the sixteenth century [Bira, 1964:33, 38]. Some particular issues of the history of Buddhism of the Mongolian-language speaking people were examined by the scholar in his work “Mongolian Historiography (from XIII to XVII c.c.)” [Bira, 1978]. The works by this reputed scholar discussed above give a rather complete picture of the way the issue of the spread of Buddhism among the Mongolian peoples was treated in the Mongolian historiography.

In one of his articles, D. Rinchen, the famous Mongolian scholar argues that Uyghur Buddhism preceded Tibetan among the Oirats [Rinchen, 1974]. Having studied Buddhism in the Yuan epoch, the scholar made a conclusion that the Oirats adhered to Tibetan Buddhism even after the Mongol dynasty’s fall in 1368 [Rinchen, 1974:95]. The culture of early Mongolians is examined in the well-known work by Ts. Damdinsuren [Damdinsuren, 1957], while the early history of Buddhism in Mongolia is the subject of an interesting article written by G. Sukhbaatar [Sukhbaatar, 1975].

Among the Chinese works of great interest for the present research are articles by Shecin Jagchid, the Taiwanese scholar, which are rather small in size but abound in rare historical data [Jagchid, 1970; 1971]. In these works he deals with the relationships between the Oirats and Ming dynasty. Thus describing the second quarter of the fifteenth century,

he points out that every year the Oirats sent their diplomatic missions to the Ming court and received respectively theirs [Jagchid, 1970:58]. Of special interest is Jagchid's work dealing with the issue of Buddhism among the Mongolian people after the fall of the Yuan dynasty as it is one of the few publications concerned with the Buddhism of the Oirats in the Ming epoch. Pointing out numerous facts of the Oirats' missions' arrival with requests of religious character, this reputed scholar makes a conclusion that only the Oirats of all the Mongolian peoples continued their Tibetan Buddhist tradition throughout the fifteenth century [Jagchid, 1971:52]. However, he did not indicate which of the schools of Buddhism they adhered to.

The present monograph also relies on the book by Vulidji Bayar, the Chinese Mongolian scholar [Vulidji, 2001]. Vulidji, dealing with the history of Mongolian-Tibetan interactions in the religious field relies largely on the Chinese sources which are of obvious interest as far as the subject of the spread of Buddhism among the Mongolian-language speaking peoples is concerned.

Of significant importance is the contribution to the Mongolian studies, including the Oirat studies, made by Indian scholars thanks to their publications and adaptations of the Tibetan primary sources. Most important among them is, of course, Sarat Chandra Das, the famous Tibetologist. In his research he relied both on the ancient Tibetan manuscripts and other primary sources and the oral tradition of Tibetan Buddhism as he was personally acquainted with many of its representatives. A real compendium of data on the history,

geography and religions of Tibet represents his famous “Tibetan-English Dictionary” [Das, 1902] compiled on the basis of the works by Sumba Khambo, whose name has been already cited here more than once. It also includes a lot of material concerning the history of Buddhism of the Mongolian peoples.

Similar data are included in a number of his articles too [Das, 1984]. As they also heavily rely on Tibetan primary sources, the articles in fact may be regarded as their retellings and thus serve as primary sources themselves used as such by many scholars. While dealing with the history of Buddhism in Mongolia, S.Ch. Das holds the view that the Oirats accepted Buddhism after the Eastern Mongolians [Das, 1984:156]. He gives a rather detailed description of the struggle between the Western and Eastern Mongolians for their influence in Tibet, including the military campaigns of Gushi Khan of the Khoshout. At the same time it should be noted that S.Ch. Das's works are not free of mistakes, sometimes rather grave, so that A. Vostrikov had to point out that misprints, lapses and lacunae “sometimes distort the meaning completely”³⁸; and they are characteristic of the author's many other works which are in general “lacking in accuracy”³⁹ [Vostrikov, 1962:96].

The prominent Indian scholar Lokesh Chandra also explored the problems of Buddhism's history among Mongolian peoples [Chandra, 1967]. He was one of the first scholars, who divided that history into three main periods.

³⁸ “иногда совершенно искажающие смысл”.

³⁹ “отличаются небрежностью”.

Tibet and Mongolia have been in the focus of attention of British scholars as well. The literature which has been published and is being published on the issues of the history and culture of these countries is rather vast and their review would require a separate study. As far as the early works of English scholars are concerned, two of them, in particular, have been used for the present research and these are the studies by Sir Henry Howorth [Howorth, 1876] and Emil Bretschneider [Bretschneider, 1888].

H. Howorth completed a large work, having collected and revised the works of his predecessors, which means he did not rely on the primary sources themselves. Nevertheless his book is still of relevance as a comprehensive survey on the history of Mongolia which also includes rather interesting observations concerning the introduction of Buddhism to the Oirats.

E. Bretschneider's book is of special interest as the author undertakes the analysis of the primary sources used in his research, which are mainly Chinese, as well as Turkic. He was one of the first critics of "A Historical Survey of the Oirats, or Kalmyks, from XV Century to the Present Time" by N. Bichurin as he pointed out a number of mistakes and inadequacies of the Chinese text made by the Russian researcher [Bretschneider, 1888:168]. Only over ten pages of Bretschneider's book deal in fact with the Mongolians and Oirats but still they are quite informative in respect of their political history.

A special approach to Tibetan primary sources was demonstrated by Sir Charles Bell whose book has served as a

source on Tibetan Buddhism of the early twentieth century since its first edition of 1931 came out [Bell, 1992]. The author who travelled in Tibet in the twenties last century managed to collect and revise not only the historical but also modern material on Buddhism. In his large research Sir Charles Bell revealed the reasons for the introduction of Buddhism in the country, as well as the process involved, including the emergence and spread of various traditions of the Buddhist thought. The use of rare primary sources given to him by Dalai Lama himself and Panchen Lama as well, the evidence supplied by the senior lamas of Tibet as well as an elaborate framework including conclusions and layout of the material – all of these contributed to produce a most informative work making the author world famous. As far as Buddhism of the Oirats is concerned the author deals with it only in connection with Gushi Khan's military campaigns. It is also notable that Geshe Wangyal, the famous Kalmyk lama, helped Ch. Bell during his journey in Tibet.

It should be pointed out however, that in England there is greater emphasis on Tibetan studies to the disadvantage of Mongolian studies. English Tibetologists were involved in the study of the Mongolians and Oirats to the extent it was required for their research of the issues of the history of Tibetan Buddhism. Nevertheless, their works introduce rare and practically unknown primary sources to the scholarly community which include unique data on Buddhism of the Mongolian-language speaking peoples.

The issue of the spread of Tibetan Buddhism beyond the borders of the country is the subject of the article by Hugh

Richardson [Richardson, 1958], the well-known English politician and diplomat. He focused his attention on the relationships between the Karma School lamas and peoples of Mongolia and China in the period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The article has been in fact the only study on such an interesting subject so far. H. Richardson relied on a variety of primary sources including "Buddhist Transmission History" by Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa and "The Blue Annals" by Shonnu Pal and on their basis he showed the genealogy of the senior lamas of the Karma school and their deeds. The first contacts of the Mongolians with the Sakya School are also described in the work and there is also a considerable stress on the Mongol Khagans' policy in favor of Buddhism. The article leaves no doubt that "the Karma-pa were the first Tibetan sect to establish influence with a ruling khan" [Richardson, 1958:144]. The author also deals with the military power of the Oirats and the Dalai Lama's meeting with Altan khan. Concerning the Oirats, Hugh Richardson points out that Buddhism spread among them right after 1578 [Richardson, 1958:155].

In his collaborative work with David Snellgrove [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968] Hugh Richardson examines the relationships of various schools with Mongolian peoples besides the issues of Tibetan cultural studies. The authors note that the data of the chronicles pointing out the priority of Tshal Kagyu school in introducing the Mongol conquerors to Tibetan Buddhism were true [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:137]. Besides there is a detailed examination of the Mongolians' interactions with Tibet after the fall of the Yuan dynasty, of the reasons determining the Mongolian khans'

turn to the Geluk School, as well as of the circumstances and results of the trip made by Sodnam Gyatso (the future Dalai Lama) to Eastern Mongolia. This book also includes very rare information concerning the 3rd Dalai Lama's trip to the Oirats (unfortunately, there is no reference to the source) [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:184] as well as the representative of the Pagmodu school taking part in the journey to Mongolia after the 4th Dalai Lama [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:193].

The foreign historiography of the forties last century was characterized by the publication of the works where Buddhism of the Oirats and Mongolians was examined separately. Special attention was given to the analysis of the primary sources; a number of articles, as well as ancient manuscripts, were published. It was in this period that the first comprehensive monographic works appeared which were devoted both to Tibetan Buddhism in general and to particular periods of its history among the Mongolian people.

“Tibetan Painted Scrolls” by Guzeppe Tucci, the famous Italian Tibetologist’s work [Tucci, 1949], became a cornerstone in the study of the history of Tibetan Buddhism. This three volume research work was aimed at investigating the issue of the spread and development of Buddhism in the Snow Land (Tibet); it also included the translation of the primary sources dealing with the Buddhist schools’ influence on the neighboring peoples. By way of a thorough examination of monastic chronicles which were practically unknown at the time and a comparative analysis of their data with other primary sources, the author managed to build a

more accurate reconstruction of particular events taking place throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, and also verify the true value and importance of a number of data of the chronicles.

G. Tucci points out that such sub-schools of the Kagyu as the Drikung and Tshal were widely spread among the Mongolian peoples [Tucci, 1949, I:8, 9, 108], and he also describes the achievements of the Geluk Schools among them. The scholar did not deal specifically with the Buddhism of the Oirats in the post-Yuan period but he paid attention to Gushi Khan's activities and his campaigns in Tibet. Of interest is the fact unknown at the time and mentioned only by Tucci that in 1638 after his secret visit to Lhasa Gushi Khan sent envoys to the Dalai Lama with an invitation to visit the Oirats but the latter refused [Tucci, 1949, I:61].

Turrel V. Wylie focused his research on the development of Tibetan-Mongolian relationships [Wylie, 1962; 1977; 1980]. Worthy of note are his commentaries to his own translation of the original text on the geography of Tibet.

There is a slightly different view on the issue of relations between the Tibetans and Chinese emperors and Mongolian khans in Luciano Petech's publications [Petech, 1939; 1983]. He focused his attention on the relationships between the descendants of Tolui (Genghis Khan's youngest son who had four sons: Mongke, Kublai, Hulagu and Ariq Boke) and various Tibetan Buddhist schools. As L. Petech pointed out, the Mongolians were able to establish their political influence in Tibet only circa 1260 and finally Tibet came under the Yuan dynasty's patronage in the early nineties of the

thirteenth century after the suppression of the Drikung School's uprising. In his other work L. Petech examined Sino-Tibetan interactions from the late seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries [Petech, 1972], focusing at the same time on the Oirats' influence on those relationships. It was beyond the scope of his research to study the history of Buddhism of the Oirats of Dzungaria and, generally speaking, Petech adhered to the view that Buddhism was spread among them by the late seventeenth century [Petech, 1972:78], i.e. after Gushi Khan's invasion of Tibet.

German scholars Heather Karmay, the Tibetologist, and Walter Heissig, the specialist in Mongolian studies, dealt with the issues of Tibetan-Mongolian religious interactions in their works. Their research papers stand out as they rely on original Chinese sources as well.

The development of Mongolian-Tibetan interactions in the first half of the thirteenth century is one of the main subjects of H. Karmay's book [Karmay, 1975]. He looks into the history of emergence of Buddhism in Tibet since very early times. The author points out the specific character of a relationship established between a lama and his patron, the ruler of a state and the beginnings of such a relationship to be found in the status of Tibetan lamas at the Tangut court [Karmay, 1975:35]. H. Karmay cites R. A. Stein who pointed out that "the journeys of the lamaist dignitaries to China were certainly not made with the aim of bringing "tribute" to the court, as the Chinese historians would have it. But neither were they "solely" destined for commerce. They were also

looking for diplomatic backing from the Emperor of China in the form of diplomas and titles" [Karmay, 1975:74-75].

"The Religions of Mongolia", W. Heissig's large research work, was published in 1987. It is in fact the first serious work with a special focus on the religions and beliefs of the Mongolian people – Shamanism and Buddhism. According to the author, the beginning of the second stage in the spread of Buddhism (the period of the Geluk School) should be dated to 1547 after the facts of religious persecution taking place in China [Heissig, 1987:25]. Moreover, he draws special attention to the fact that even before that time the Sakya, Karma and Nyingma monasteries still existed in Mongolia [Heissig, 1987:28]. The perception of the "Yellow Hat" teaching by the Oirats was dated by him to the first quarter of the sixteenth century [Heissig, 1987:26].

In Belgium Henry Serruys studied Sino-Mongolian and Sino-Oirat interactions in the Ming epoch using the data of their trade relations as the general historical background [Serruys, 1975]. Thus he pointed out the regular character of diplomatic missions sent by the Oirats to the Ming court throughout the fifteenth century when the former received presents having to do with the religious aspect [Serruys, 1975:53]. Henry Serruys also points out the names of the monks living at the time among the Oirats [Serruys, 1975:44].

American scholars have paid serious attention to the issues of Buddhism in Tibet and among Mongolian people in their works which are characterized by a scrupulous analysis of texts and an all-round approach to the facts contained in them

making the most of the information obtained from rather laconic Tibetan primary sources. As a rule, besides Tibetan texts American scholars also rely on Chinese rather than Mongolian materials.

Since the seventies last century in the USA there has been a considerable impetus given to Tibetan studies related here closely with Mongolian studies. That was not accidental. In our opinion, it is necessary to single out the period of the seventies and eighties, as well the nineties of the twentieth century in the revision of the American historiography; and there are at least two reasons for this. First, prior to the eighties "The Tibetan Painted Scrolls" by G. Tucci had every right to be regarded as the only comprehensive work on Tibetan Buddhism, as well as on Buddhism of the Western Mongolians, and it included translations of rare primary sources or references to those unavailable at the time. This was possible largely because Tucci visited Tibet before Chinese troops entered the country and he had also had direct access to the primary sources. After the Chinese seized power in country, scholars could not enter Tibet for a long time which explains why there were so few works on Tibetan studies. The situation began gradually to improve in the late seventies and early eighties with the foundation of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh, India) and enrichment of its funds, which resulted in further research and publication of works. Second, some of the future American Tibetologists started their studies of Tibet and made their first steps in the Tibetan language only in the seventies at the school (center) in New Brunswick which was organized by Geshe Wangyal, the

Kalmyk lama who has been mentioned above. Among his pupils there were such well-known scholars as Robert Thurman, Jeffrey Hopkins (who are also the first western translators of the 14th Dalai Lama) and Glenn Mullin.

The present survey of works published in the USA should probably be started with the well-known books by Louis Schram [Schram, 1954; 1957], which were a major contribution to the study of the spread of Buddhism beyond Tibetan borders and, in particular, among the Monguor who lived on the territory situated between Tibet, China and Mongolia. Pointing out that to study the life of the Monguor and the influence of Buddhism among them “it is advantageous to know the historical frame in which the Monguors lived under the Ming dynasty and during the first decades of the Ch’ing dynasty” [Schram, 1954:34], L. Schram deals with the history of Buddhism of the people under study against the background of the general history of Buddhism in Tibet, China, Western and Eastern Mongolia. Besides he also drew attention to the significant role played by the Monguor lamas: “Chang-chia, Sum-pa, Mei-chu-erh, and T’u-kuan Hutukhtus, as many less celebrated Living Buddhas” in the spread of Buddhism all over Mongolia [Schram, 1957:6]. The data on Buddhism of the Oirats in the epochs of Ming and Qing were included by Schram in the two parts of his work. He based his research on the evidence of the so called “Sinin Annals” which also included important extracts from “Ming shi”.

Luc Kwanten’s dissertation [Kwanten, 1972] dealt with the titles given to lamas by Mongolian Yuan Khagans and the

interactions between the Mongolians and Tibet at the time. While examining the events of the war of 1285-1290 between the Drikung Kagyu and Sakya, the author makes a conclusion that those ‘upper Mongols’ mentioned as the Drikung allies must have been Khaidu’s subjects [Kwanten, 1972:131]. This conclusion is of interest for the present research as it is known that Khaidu relied on the Oirats in his war against Kublai.

In the eighties the scholars continued their study of an interesting and, undoubtedly, complex issue of the interactions between the Mongolian people and Tibetans in the Yuan epoch when for the first time the Tibetan Buddhism had such a significant effect on the Mongols. Morris Rossabi’s works deal specifically with the period of Kublai’s rule [Rossabi, 1981; 1988], in which the scholar described Ariq Boke’s fight against Hulagu and the Drikung’s uprising against the Sakya. However, M. Rossabi’s works are not free of some mistakes of the general character. Thus according to the scholar, the Naiman and Kereit were Turkic tribes [Rossabi, 1988:4], while it is recognized now that they were Western Mongolians. Similar problems are discussed in H. Franke’s article published in “China under Mongol Rule” [Franke, 1981]. The issue of the Manchu-Tibetan-Mongolian relations in the first half of the seventeenth century (with the Oirats included in the discussion) is the subject of the articles by David Farquhar [Farquhar, 1978] and Samuel Grupper [Grupper, 1984].

Of importance is the contribution of Elliot Sperling, the American scholar, to Tibetan, Mongolian and Oirat studies.

His articles are characterized by a comprehensive and scrupulous analysis of Tibetan texts supported by important additional materials from other primary sources. In his article “Lama to the King of Hsia” [Sperling, 1987] the author deals with the issue of Tibetan monks’ emergence as “Emperor’s Tutors” in the state of Tangut prior to its invasion by Genghis Khan in 1227. These monks were lamas of the Kagyu subschools. According to E. Sperling, the Mongol Khagans tried hard to follow the spiritual life of the Tangut court and perhaps this accounts for the fact that, for example, Godan Khan was recognized as the reincarnation of one of the Tangut rulers while “Lama-Patron” interaction pattern which existed at the Yuan court had their roots in the Tibetan-Tangut relationships of the past [Sperling, 1987:36-37].

In his article devoted to the Drikung Kagyu lamas [Sperling, 1987a] E. Sperling examines the reasons for the war between the Drikung Kagyu and Sakya in 1285-1290. A few years earlier he published articles [Sperling, 1979; 1983] dealing with the emergence and development of relationships between the Ming emperors and top religious figures of Tibet. These articles are helpful in understanding the historical background against which the Oirat-Chinese interactions developed in the fifteenth century. Sperling was the first among scholars to pay attention to the relationships existing between the Mongolian peoples living in the north of Tibet in the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and the Drikung School. As it was found out in the course of the investigation [Sperling, 1992] that these interactions were so close, the author thought it was necessary to point out that “we do not, however, consider the ‘Bri-gung-pa as active

participants in alliances with Mongols similar to those that mark the histories of the Sa-skya-pa and Dge-lugs-pa sects" [Sperling, 1992:742]. In view of the fact that these Mongolians were most likely to be the Oirats, Elliot Sperling also examines the Tibetan terms of "sog" and "khor" which were associated with the Western and Eastern Mongolians. In conclusion pointing out that it is very difficult to identify the ethnic character of these Mongolian groups, E. Sperling notes that it is these interactions between the Drikung and Mongolian-language speaking tribes in the north of Tibet that finally determined the quick success of the Geluk in propagation of their teaching [Sperling, 1992:750].

Of course, not all of the primary sources in the Tibetan language give just a very general outline of the ethnic character of their Mongolian-language speaking neighbors in different parts of Mongolia. Thus in one of the sources investigated by T. Gibson [Gibson, 1990], for example, the Oirtas are not simply identified as such but also as belonging to different clans such as the Torgout (Tib. thor ghod) and Dzungar (Tib. jung gar). In his article the scholar cites the original and the translation of his Tibetan source and deals with the emergence and spread of the Geluk teaching among the Oirats by way of describing, in particular, the period of education in Tibet of lama Anja (Anjjatan), the famous Kalmyk Buddhist figure of the first half of the eighteenth century; the author examines this unique text in detail in the respective part of his monograph. Thus the Tibetan source deals with the period of the early eighteenth century but, of course, this does not mean that the "Yellow Hat" teaching was unknown to the Oirats before. As T. Gibson points out in

his commentary to the text the Tibetan author “was simply unaware of the pre-eminent religious figures among that distant group” (these are the Torgouts as they lived at the time in Russia). However, it may be noted that the Tibetans were sometimes unaware of what was happening even in the neighboring Dzungaria. Thus T. Gibson notes with some surprise that “the Torguts were perhaps little noticed even after their return to Sinkiang (in 1771 – B.K.)” [Gibson, 1990:91]. Thus Tibetan sources may not include the materials we expect to find in them but these may be found in other sources, for example, the Oirat (Kalmyk) ones. But since the studies of this kind have been undertaken only recently, we need to sum up the historiographic survey with the following observation, made by T. Gibson, that “the history of Buddhism among the Western mongols remains little studied” [Gibson, 1990:90].

CHAPTER III. THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF THE OIRATS BEFORE THE FALL OF THE YUAN DYNASTY

3.1. The Main Stages of Early Oirat History

The first references to the Oirats are found in “The Secret History of the Mongols” [Kozin, 1941], as well as in the “Compendium of Chronicles” by Rashid-al-Din, the famous Persian historian (1247—1318) [Rashid-al-Din, 1946, 1952, 1960].

It was in the early thirteenth century that the Mongols first confronted the Oirats at the Yenisey River. According to the Mongolian chronicle “Shara Tuuji”, in order to win over the Oirat Khan Khudukha Beki by peaceful strategy, Genghis Khan married his daughter Tsetsei-Ken to Inelchi, the Khudukha Beki’s son. Khudukha Beki’s other son, Torelchi, married Kholoikhan – the daughter of Jochi (Genghis Khan’s eldest son) [“Shara Tuuji”, 1957:160; Kozin, 1941:175]. Other members of Genghis Khan’s family were also related to the Oirats through matrimonial ties. Thus the senior wife of Ariq Boke (Tolui’s son and Genghis Khan’s grandson), with whom ‘he was very much in love’, was Ilchikmish-Khatun, the granddaughter of Torelchi mentioned above [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:119].

Chagatai's, Guyuk's, Mongke's and Hulagu's families had matrimonial ties with the Oirats too. Moreover, Tolui had his sons (Mongke, Kublai, Hulagu, Ariq Boke) by Sorkakteni Beki, who was the daughter of Jakambu (Tangut-Tib. *rgya dpon po*, or “the great sovereign, ruler”, “the Ruler of the country”; in Rashid-al-Din's translation “the great Emir of the country”). Jakambu was the brother of Ong Khan (Van Khan), the ruler of the Kereit [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:130-131].

Of certain interest, and mentioned by Marco Polo, is that “on August 28, always on this very day, the Great Khan (Kublai – B.K.) leaves the town (Shandu, the capital of Kublai's empire – B.K.) and the royal palace for one and the same reason: he owns a breed of white stallions and white mares, white as snow, which are very numerous, as many as ten thousand mares, and nobody except the members of the Great Khan's royal family are allowed to drink the milk of these mares; but the Goria (i.e. the Oirats – B.K.) can drink that milk. The privilege was granted to them by Genghis Khan for their support in one of his victories”⁴⁰ [Giovanni Da Pian Del Carpin et al, 1997:242-243].

Pointing out the privileged status of the Oirats in the Genghis Khan's Empire, S. Kozin noted: “This alliance...

⁴⁰ “Двадцать восьмого августа, всегда в этот день, великий хан уезжает из того города и из того дворца, и вот почему: есть у него порода белых коней и белых кобыл, белых как снег, без всяких пятен, и многое их множество, более десяти тысяч кобыл. Молоко этих кобыл никто не смеет пить, только те, кто императорского рода, то есть из рода великого хана; то молоко могут пить еще гориаты; был им такой почет от Чингисхана за то, что раз помогли ему победить”.

strengthened by intermarriages and the acceptance of the heir of the Mongol throne as the supreme guide by the Oirats, was made by Genghis Khan.... He was fully aware of their great importance in the building of his empire in terms of his strategic policy in relations with other nations and groups both on the international and domestic scene, as well as in terms of their cultural contribution; and he appreciated all of this”⁴¹ [Kozin, 1940:17].

As early as the mid-thirteenth century, thanks to their closely allied relationship, the Oirats were able to leave the upper Yenisey region and move somewhat to the south to occupy the territory of Western Mongolia, also called Dzungaria [Vasilyev, 1857:73]. At that time Dzungaria was inhabited by the Western Mongolian groups of the Naiman. Their eastern neighbors were the Kereit who lived along the river of Selenga and the Hangai Mountains. In the north the Kereit lived next to the Merkit, another of the Western Mongolian tribes [Viktorova, 1980:170].

These ethnic groups, as well as “the Oirats of the pre-Mongolian era” proper, were the main contributors to the ethnogenesis of the Western Mongolian Oirat tribes [Avlyaev, 1994:124].

⁴¹ “Такой своеобразный союз, закрепленный брачным родством и принятием к себе ойратами, в качестве верховного блюстителя ойратства, наследника монгольского престола, был заключен Чингисханом с ойратами, великое значение которых в создаваемой империи, значение и стратегическое, и международное, и внутреннополитическое и культурное он ясно себе представлял и ценил по достоинству”.

According to “Erdeniin Tobchi” by Sagang Sechen [Schmidt, 1829:7, 57], the Oirats of the first half of the thirteenth century were a confederation of the four clans – the Ogelet (Olet), Bagatut (Batut), Khoit and Kergut.

Our search in the earlier primary sources for further evidence of this composition of the Oirat alliance has failed, as the tribes in question are either referred to as “the forest nations” (the umbrella term) or simply as the Oirats (Elets/ Olets). In the Chinese sources the ethnonyms - the Oirat and Elet - are often confused. Maybe V. Uspensky was right when he had pointed out that “Elyut is the incorrect form of Oirat”⁴² [Uspensky, 1880:78]. Besides, E. Bretschneider explains the origin of “Elyut” by the specific pronunciation of the self-name “Oirat” in Chinese – “o-lu-te” [Bretschneider, 1888:168]. However, it also seems probable that in the thirteenth century the Oirat still had among them a specific ethnic group of the “Elet”. Thus one of the Kalmyk primary sources refers to the Elet who unexpectedly left for Persia [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:12, 19]. Obviously, the time of the western expedition of the Elet (and the Oirtas in general) was somewhat changed in the memory of the people, as we are more likely to deal here with the Oirats’ participation in Hulagu Khan’s expansion to Persia (see below).

The term “Derben-Oirat” (“Four Oirats”) is often used in historical literature to refer to the Oirats. However, the scholars have been unable to agree on the time “the confederation of the four clans” was formed and the circumstances leading to its formation, as well as on their

⁴² “Элют есть искажение имени Ойрат”.

connection with particular Western Mongolian tribal confederations. These questions are dealt with in considerable detail by I. Zlatkin in his monographic work [Zlatkin, 1983:30-38].

A number of historians, including, for example, S. Kozin, dated back the formation of the Oirat confederation directly to the period of the Mongol expansions when the Oirats first joined the united empire, and then after its fall maintained an existence independently from the Chingisids [Kozin, 1940:4-5]. An opposite view was held by B. Vladimirtsov who believed that in fact there had never been any confederation of the four Oirat clans, while the idea about such an alliance was prompted by a certain misunderstanding: the word “oyirad” means “close”⁴³ which was further interpreted as “allies” [Vladimirtsov, 1934:156-157].

The primary sources of the period (between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries) do not contain any particular references to the Oirats as “the confederation of the four clans”. The only exception is the Rashid-al-Din’s work where it is pointed out that, “these tribes were always numerous even in the ancient times and were divided into several clans each having a separate name with such an arrangement...”⁴⁴ [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:118].

In another attempt to deal with the issue of the origin of the “Four Oirats”, V. Uspensky points out that “as far as the

⁴³ In Oirat language “oorhan”, “oorad” means *near, close*.

⁴⁴ “Эти племена еще издревле были многочисленны и разветвлялись на несколько отраслей, у каждой в отдельности было определенное название с таким распределением”.

Chinese evidence on the Oirats is concerned the most surprising thing to us is their ethnographic division into clans or branches, as well as efforts to unite them by any means into four branches (Sy O-lu-te), which manifests the absence of even the slightest possibility of any criticism, as well as an obvious administrative pressure of the Bogdo Khan's bureaucracy”⁴⁵ [Uspensky, 1880:75]. V. Uspensky himself ascribed the origin of the term “Derben-Oirat” to “the Durben”, the Old Mongolian tribe, which does not seem to be convincing [Sanchirov, 1990:60-61].

There is no doubt that the Oirats were several tribes who had formed an alliance which existed even before they joined Genghis Khan's Empire. But after they organized to make up the four tyumens in the Great Khan's army, the Oirats received their somewhat changed name of “Derben-Oirat” (Four Oirats)⁴⁶. It is possible to draw a parallel here with the Eastern Mongolians who, for example, even in the eighteenth century were still called “Docin Mongol” (“Forty Mongols”, or “forty tyumens”), though in fact they were far less numerous. “The same thing happened with the name - Dorben Oirad, the only difference being that in the course of time the number of the Oirats increased considerably as

⁴⁵ “Всего же более поражает нас в китайских сведениях об ойратах этнографическое деление их на роды или отделы и усилия заставить ойратов быть в количестве четырех (Сы О-лу-тэ), отзывающиеся несомненным и полнейшим отсутствием критики и видимым давлением административных и богдоханских распоряжений”

⁴⁶ Besides, one cannot rule out the fact that the Oirats were in fact made up of the four main clans which was pointed out by Sagan Cetzen (see above).

compared with the time of Genghis Khan's Empire and Yuan dynasty”⁴⁷ [Vladimirtsov, 1934:156-157].

It should be noted here that the generic name “Oirats” is used by the author of this work as an umbrella term for all Western Mongolian nations of the period under consideration.

Certainly, both the Oirats and Mongols were fully aware of their closeness but they also knew they were different nations. Throughout the period of the Mongol Empire and the following periods, the people used the terms “tabun ongge, dorben xari ulus” (“five confederations (of Mongols) and four black ones (the Oirats)”, or “docin dorben xoyar” (“forty (Mongols) and four (Oirats)”) to describe the composition of their state, at times united and at times divided [Kozin, 1940:4]. It is clear that besides its association with the military term of “four tyumens”, “dorben” also has an implication of the four main ethnic subdivisions of the Oirats, the so called “confederation of the four Oirats”.

The neighboring nations also singled out the Oirats from the rest of the Mongolians. Thus in the Chinese chronicle “Ming shi” (ch. 328, p. 3774) it is recorded, “The Wala (i.e. Oirats) are Mongolian tribes living to the west of the Dada (i.e. Eastern Mongolians)...”⁴⁸ (Cited from: [Chernishev, 1990:18]; see also: [Pokotilov, 1893:32]). In the Ming epoch

⁴⁷ “То же самое произошло и с названием Dorben Oyirad с той только разницей, что с течением времени ойратов стало гораздо больше, чем в век Чингиса и Юаньской династии”.

⁴⁸ “Вала (т.е. ойраты) — это монгольские племена, обитающие на западе от дада (т.е. восточных монголов)”.

the Oirats were also called the Waila, Wayla, Weylate, Elute, Ulute [Chernishev, 1990:54].

In his description of the Oirats, Rashid-al-Din pointed out that “their language is Mongolian, though it has some smaller differences from that of other Mongol tribes”⁴⁹ [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:118].

In the Tibetan historiography the Mongolian speaking tribes were denoted as the Sog (sog) and the Khor (hor). It should be pointed out, however, that “in early times the Tibetans probably did not distinguish between the Mongols and Turks and called them all the Khor” [DAMDINSUREN, 1957:216]. For instance, the ethnonym “Khor-po”, mentioned in the Red Book, should be referred to the Uyghur, according to Y. Roerich, whom we support here [Roerich, 1976, I:XVII]. However, the same term should be referring to the Mongols (hor rgyal po ching ges — Mongol Khan Genghis) when we deal with the events of the period of the Mongol expansions.

There are different opinions as far as the terms “Sog” and “Khor” are concerned [Tucci, 1949, I:256; Tsibikoff, 1991, II:31; Pubaev, 1981:219-220]. The predominant view is that the Tibetans mostly used the name “Sog-po” (sog po) to refer to the Oirats, and “Khor-po” (hor po) to refer to the Eastern Mongolians [Howorth, 1876:498; Chandra, 1967, pt. 2:9; Schulemann, 1958:222; Ahmad, 1970:195; Dugarov, 1983:142]⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ “Их язык монгольский, он все же имеет небольшую разницу от языка других монгольских племен”.

⁵⁰ During the study trip to Dharamsala (Himachal-Pradesh, India) (September 1992 - March 1993) I was happy to meet the Venerable Kirti

To illustrate the point, Sakya Pandit Kunga Gyaltsan (Sa skyā pan di ta kun dga rgyal mtshan, 1181-1251), the famous Tibetan religious figure, wrote in his letter from Godan Khan's headquarters addressing the secular and religious Tibetan leaders that, “The Chinese, the Minag (Tangut – B.K.), the Sogpo and other peoples... had been forced to pay a tribute... For some years, no (Hor) soldiers came to upper Tibet. (This happen because I)... did homage as a vassal...” [Tucci, 1949, I:10]. It can be seen that there is an obvious difference made by the author of the letter between the “Khor” and “Sog”.

Evidently, the ethnonym “Sog-po” came to be associated with the Oirats because they arrived to settle down on the territory which used to be inhabited by the Uyghur and other Turks⁵¹. Therefore the name formerly used to denote the Turks was transferred to the Western Mongolian tribes. This kind of transference had occurred before. Thus there used to be a powerful Tatar tribe in the period between the ninth and tenth centuries who owned a considerable territory near the

Tsenshab Rinpoche, one of the greatest experts of Tibetan history and reputed figure of the Geluk School. Rinpoche was also known as “the Keeper of the whole of the sacred Dharma Buddha” (“хранитель всей священной Дхармы Будды”) [Lama Zopa, 1996:35]. According to the Rinpoche, “Sog-po” in the Tibetan works invariably referred to the Oirats, while “Khor-po” referred to both the Mongols and Oirats which is the cause of all kinds of confusion and misunderstanding in historical works. Thus in some particular cases “Khor-po” may mean the Oirats, not Mongols.

⁵¹ Here we deal first of all with Dzungaria and Eastern Turkestan. G. Tsibikoff also mentions the Tibetan use of the ethnonym of their former neighbors to refer to the new ones, but only as far as the term “khor” is concerned [Tsibikoff, 1991, II:33].

borders of the Chinese provinces [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:101], including the land in the North-Western Mongolia and Eastern Turkistan. S. Klyashtorny [Klyashtorny, 1993:142-143] believes that between the ninth and twelfth centuries there was a Tatar state (of the Kara-Khanids) on the territory of Gansu and Eastern Turkestan; this vast region was named the “Tatar steppe” by Makhmud Kashgari. In a century when the Mongols occupied their land they were also called Tatars by the neighboring people though the Mongols themselves never used the term.

The division of the numerous Mongolian people into Eastern and Western branches became more prominent in the second half of the thirteenth century when the former united empire started to fall apart. Then the Mongolian speaking nations of Dzungaria got the name of “To-khor” (stod hor), or the Western (Upper) Mongolians, besides their former “Sog-po” name⁵², while the Eastern Mongolians got to be known as “Me-khor” (smad hor), or the Lower ones.

This division of the Mongolian world turned out to be quite long-standing. Thus in the late nineteenth century, visiting Tibet, Baza Bakshi, the famous Kalmyk (Derbet) religious figure, pointed out that “they (Tibetans – B.K.) refer to the Mongolians of the north as “the lower” ones while the

⁵² According to S.Ch. Das, “to-khor” means the same as “to-sog” (stod sog) and refers to “the Tatars (*i.e. the Oirats - BK*) of Bokhara and Khoten”; see [Das, 1902:554]. Another name for the Oirats (“Tatars”) of Turkistan is “gya sog” (rgya sog) [Das, 1902:307]. The Mongolian clans that lived in the north of Tibet (Amdo) had been called “gya-khor” (“dja-khor”) since the Godan’s rule; see.: [Dugarov, 1983:78].

Tsaidam (Oirats – B.K.) are called “upper” Mongolians⁵³ [A Tale, 1897:156]. The latter term was also used to refer to those Mongolians who followed Hulagu to the west⁵⁴. Hulagu, who was the Tolui’s son and Genghis Khan’s grandson, founded a new Mongolian state in Persia⁵⁵ where he ruled from 1256 to 1265. Since part of the Hulagu’s army was Oirat, the history of Oiratian Buddhism in Persia will be discussed below.

It should be noted here that while discussing the Tibetan terms for particular Mongolian speaking tribes we are also able to give a more detailed description of the stages and directions of the spread of Buddhist teachings among them, as well as to identify the ethnic groups involved in the process.

But before actually dealing with the periods of Buddhism among the Oirats, it is necessary to discuss their religious views, as well as the interactions between the Oirats and Tibetans which had been established by the thirteenth century.

⁵³ “Северных монголов они зовут ‘низовыми’ монголами, а цайдамских зовут ‘верховыми’ монголами”.

⁵⁴ It is known that Hulagu was sent to Persia by the decision of the Kurultai of 1253. The Khagan of Mongolia at the time was his brother Mongke who had already been elected as the Khagan by the Kurultai in the summer of 1251.

⁵⁵ According to the Tibetan treatise “Gtam-gyi-tshogs thag-pa'i-rgya-mtsho zhes-by-a-ba”, “Cechen Khan’s (Kublai’s) elder brother named Hulahu did not ascend the throne and left with his 100.000 strong army given to him as his part of the inheritance ... He settled down in Stod (i.e. Western Tibet) and they came to be known as *To-khor* (stod hor – upper Mongols), while those who stayed in China were known as *Me-khor* (smad hor)”; op. cit.: [Wylie, 1962:134].

3.2. The Religions and Beliefs of the Western Mongolians.

The Early Stage of Buddhism

In the period before the Mongol conquests, the spiritual world of the Oirats was a complex of views, characteristic of medieval Central Asia with its turbulent political and economic life. Let us deal, first of all, with shamanism which represented a certain system of beliefs in the supernatural power of all natural phenomena, with a possibility of affecting them through shamans (Tungus “saman”).

Shamanism was a mixture of ancient religious forms such as totemism, animism, fetishism and the cult of ancestors. The interaction of various forms of religions and shamanism led to mixed forms of religious consciousness; shamanism gradually lost its position.

Since ancient times, Asia has been under Indian influence. The beginning of this cultural impact is dated back to the first millennium BC [Bongard-Levin, Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, 1990:30]. Buddhism started to spread in Central Asia (and first of all in Eastern Turkistan) as early as the first century. It should be noted that it was through Khotan and Eastern Turkistan that the Central Asian people became acquainted with Buddhism and through the religion had access to the achievements of Indian culture [Eastern Turkistan, 1992:34]. The Tokhar, the population of the region with an original culture of their own, were quick to learn Indian forms of writing and created their own literary tradition, translating many Buddhist works into their mother tongue. Among the

translations were such important treatises as "Prajna-paramita", "Ashtasahasrika Prajna-paramita Sutra", "Vajracchedika Prajna-paramita Sutra", etc. At present scholars are involved in the study and description of the texts found in Gilgit, Bamyan and Eastern Turkistan; the description of the Turfan collection, one of the largest of the Sanskrit manuscripts ever found in the world, which was found in Eastern Turkistan, has been completed.

One of the achievements of the Tokhar speaking cultural region was the creation of their own Brahmi script, the famous Central Asian type of writing in the heyday of early Buddhism there. Of importance is the fact that the Tokhar languages served as a medium through which many of the Eastern-Iranian and Sanskrit words came into the Old Turkic, as well as Mongolian languages [Eastern Turkestan, 1992:15]. Even today references to the Tokhar as their nearest neighbors can be found both in the Mongolian and Kalmyk historical literature.

Spreading beyond the Indian borders, Buddhism underwent certain changes as a result of its interactions with the cultural traditions of the populations of the particular region where it was spread. Thus the local forms of Buddhism in Central Asia differed considerably from each other, as well as from the Indian model in general.

The centre of Mahayana was Khotan, and that of Hinayana was Kashgar (in the middle and late first millennium A.D.). Khotan was not only the centre where Mahayana treatises were translated and kept, but also where new works were written. It was the destination of many monks and their

disciples escaping from the Arabian conquests and religious persecution. The edicts of the Tang Emperor, directed against Buddhist teachings, resulted in the exodus of the Chinese Buddhists to Eastern Turkistan and in the formation of another important centre of Mahayana in Dunhuang. Soon, as this oasis was conquered by Tibet in the middle of the eighth century, the number of works published in the Tibetan language increased. The military conflict between the Arabs and Tibetans and the exodus of the latter from their conquered Central Asian provinces resulted, on the one hand, in the crisis of Buddhism in the Central Asian regions with a strong Buddhist influence, and in Tibet itself which lasted at least up to the arrival of the famous Buddhist figure Atiśa Dipankara Shrijnana in the Country of Mountains from the monastery of Vikramasila (Magadha of Northern India). On the other hand, the conflict of the religions also led to their interaction, contributing to the religious awareness of the people as well.

Quite characteristic of the role of the religious factor in the social life of the Oirats is the fact that Khudukha Beki, the Oirat Khan whom we have mentioned above, had the word “beki” (“biki”) as part of his title. According to V. Bartold, “it had the meaning of the supreme monk, the highest religious authority... The word *biki* is a component of the titles of some royalties, such as the Mergit and Oirat rulers”⁵⁶ [Bartold, 1963, I:458-59]. It is probably at this time that we

⁵⁶ “Обозначало первосвященника, высший религиозный авторитет... Слово бики встречается в титулах некоторых государей, например мергитского и ойратского”.

should look for the origin of the word “shaji”⁵⁷ as well, which was used to refer to the Oirat monks and then their head monk. With the beginning of the period of Tibetan Buddhism, the head monk of the Western Mongolians was referred to as “Shazhin Lama”.

By the time under consideration, the supranational religions had started to spread among the Oirats and found their first followers among the ruling classes. There are different opinions concerning the religious situation in the Mongolian world in the pre-imperial period. Thus without making clear distinctions between the nations and clans making up this ethnic entity and without using all the primary sources available to scholars today, some researchers have come to the conclusion that the religious beliefs of the Mongols (i.e. Mongolian speaking peoples – B.K.) could be divided into three layers: firstly, the cult of the Heavens; secondly, the ideas based on the concept of the so called “tengrism” and finally, the shamanistic views proper [Galdanova, 1992:31].

One cannot doubt, of course, that the early beliefs were still an important part of the religious consciousness of the people, especially if we take into consideration the fact that the shamanistic and pre-shamanistic ideas of life and death, existence of one’s soul after death and so on were still widespread among Kalmyks (Oirats) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So one can imagine how strong their position was in the beginning of the second millennium.

⁵⁷ The word may be of Iranian origin related to the word “Shah” by its etymology. As it is known after the Tibetan dominance in Central Asia (8th – 9th centuries) a vast state of the Persian dynasties was formed with its rulers holding both the supreme secular and religious powers.

The Oirats believed in the Heaven (Menke kok Tangry) and heavenly bodies. The cult of the mountains, trees, water and earth was also widespread. They made sacrifices to fire and their totemic animals⁵⁸. Of special importance was the cult of ancestors which later became an indispensable part of the Oirat Buddhist worldview. There is no doubt, however, that the shamanistic influence reduced considerably with the beginning of their intense contacts with the Naiman and Kereit (Nestorian Christians at the time), as well as with the missionaries of diverse religions. The importance of the shamans also dropped due to “the forest nations” and the Oirats’⁵⁹ gradual transition to a nomadic way of life as they moved farther into the steppes of Central Asia. This is how the process was described by V. Bartold: “The loss of power by the shamans, pointed out by Rashid-al-Din, as a result of a change from a hunter’s way of life to that of a nomad, should also be viewed as a common feature; their influence cannot but decrease when people acquire more military attitudes and

⁵⁸ See in detail: [Heissig, 1987:5, 6]. Unfortunately, there is in fact no evidence concerning the Oirat Shamanism of the period in question. The first reference to the Shamanism of the Oirats is cited in the Oirat-Mongolian laws of 1640.

⁵⁹ “They are referred to as ‘the forest peoples’ by Rashid-al-Din, as well as, apparently, by his contemporaries to characterize mostly the place where they lived rather than their type of economy. In other words, not all of ‘the forest peoples’ were in fact hunters and fishermen” (“Термин ‘лесные народы’... применялся Рашид-ад-дином, а также, очевидно, и его современниками преимущественно для характеристики места обитания того или иного племени, но не специфики его хозяйства. Иными словами, далеко не все ‘лесные народы’ были охотниками и рыболовами”) [Rumyantsev, 1968:150].

develop a custom of relying on the efficiency of their weapons”⁶⁰ [Bartold, 1968, V:471].

Under the circumstances, the shamans had to introduce some changes in their activities: firstly, they “went underground”, i.e. they continued their usual rituals and practices but only somewhere far away from the centre and in other places where it was still possible; secondly, like the Bon priests in Tibet and the Manicheans on the vast expanses of Central Asia, they changed their hymns, gowns, religious and sacred instruments for Buddhist ones. Besides, one should not forget about the tolerance characteristic of Buddhism. Thus alongside the official religion and network of monasteries (adapted to the nomadic lifestyle of its Central Asian followers) there still existed the former faiths and ritual practices of the nomads. Therefore, this rather diverse picture of the religious views of the Oirats of the day does not allow the making of conclusions about the predominant role of a particular faith. Instead, it may be possible, with a various degree of confidence, to trace back the influences or elements of those religious views, with all kinds of primary sources of the period taken into consideration.

In the pre-Buddhist period the systematization of religious views (if there was any) might have been a result of contacts with more developed religious systems such as Christianity. The Oirats were perhaps introduced to Christianity by their

⁶⁰ “Отмеченный у Рашид-ад-дина упадок авторитета шаманов в связи с переходом от охотничьего быта к кочевому также, по-видимому, должен быть признан общим явлением; влияние шаманов не может не падать, когда в народе развивается воинственность и привычка полагаться на силу оружия”.

neighbors, the Kereit and Naiman, with whom they later united in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. A most interesting observation was made by Ch. Valikhanov in this connection: "It is also remarkable that in this part of Asia (Dzungaria – B.K.) there were very many Nestorian and Monophysitian congregations ..."⁶¹ [Valikhanov, 1861:194].

The Naiman, the large Western Mongolian tribe, followed Nestorian Christianity [Bartold, 1968, vol. 5, p. 108, 618]. The Kereit had been Christians since 1007 [Viktorova, 1980, p. 168]⁶². "According to the legend, the Kerait embraced Christianity because St. Sergy appeared before the Khan of the Kerait, who had lost his way in a desert, to show him the way home. The Khan was christened with all his people and was named Margus (Mark)"⁶³ [Gumilyov, 1994:169].

At the same time the Oirats were aware of some Buddhist teachings. This happened not only through the efforts of the missionaries of this world religion (mostly Uyghur) but also thanks to the activities of the Manicheans, whose missionaries had borrowed Buddhist phraseology, pictures and forms of ritual in an attempt to establish their influence throughout Central Asia. Thus the Tangut had Manichaeism

⁶¹ "Замечательно еще, что в этой части Азии было особенно много несторианских и монофизитских конгрегаций".

⁶² As Rashid-al-Din pointed out, "the Jesus" ('Peace be with him!') call had reached them (the Kereit – B.K.) and they embraced the Jesus' faith" ("До них дошел призыв Иисуса, — мир ему! — и они вступили в его веру") [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:127].

⁶³ "Согласно легенде, обращение керайтов произошло вследствие того, что керайтскому хану, заблудившемуся в пустыне, явился св. Сергий и указал путь домой. Хан крестился со всем своим народом, и получил имя Маргуз (Марк)".

and Buddhism mixed to a great degree: the Manichean deities of heavenly bodies, decorated according to Buddhist canons, were discovered on the icons in Khara-Khoto [Kochetova, 1947]. In the light of this evidence one can hardly agree with the opinion existent in Russian historiography that the first introduction of the Mongols to Buddhism took place during their expansions to Northern China [Kuchera, 1970:261; see also: Buddhism, 1992:164; Zlatkin, 1983:98]. This point of view does not take into consideration the earlier cultural impact of the neighboring populations, such as the Uyghur on the Mongolians. Meanwhile it is the Uyghur who made a considerable contribution to the development of Oirat, as well as Mongolian culture. The first stage of Buddhism in the Mongolian speaking nations is connected with this Central Asian people.

But before Buddhism was introduced to the Uyghur, Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity were widely spread among them. The former had had a considerable influence in Central Asia since 762 when the Uyghur Khagan adopted it as their state religion. But as early as 840, after the Kyrgyz invasion and the fall of the Uyghur state which had spread on the larger part of modern Sinkiang province, the Uyghur moved to the region of Turfan and Gansu, i.e. Northern Tibet [Malyavkin, 1983:109]. The influence of Manichaeism and Christianity decreased while that of Buddhism was growing⁶⁴.

⁶⁴ The Mongolian researcher G. Suhbaatar pointed out that the Uyghur had adopted Buddhism only after they moved from the territory of Mongolia, i.e. since the tenth century [Suhbaatar, 1975:69]. On the Uyghur religion see also: [Tikhonov, 1966:200-235].

The Uyghur were able to create a vast collection of Buddhist literature in a relatively short period of time, making translations from Tibetan, Chinese, Sanskrit and several other languages into Uyghur. The Buddhist treatises in Uyghur were widely spread in Central Asia. They were also known beyond the political borders of the Uyghur state, for example, in Dunhuang, as well as in the Tangut state [Tikhonov, 1966:28]. It is the Uyghur who were the first Buddhist teachers of the Mongolian speaking nations, and of the Oirats, their closest neighbors, in the first place.

B. Vladimirtsov pointed out, “The Mongolians ... were introduced to Buddhism ... under Genghis Khan, or maybe even earlier. The Mongolian tribes had to deal with the Uyghur in the early day of their history... At that early time the Uyghur had already been under the influence of the world religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, the latter was especially important in the eastern part of the Uyghur lands, the nearest to the Mongols. It was thanks to these people that the Mongolians had their first ideas about Buddhism and many of them accepted its teachings”⁶⁵ [Vladimirtsov, 1919:16-17]. Along these lines S. Kozin directly pointed to the Oirats, that the western groups of the Mongolians were under the earliest and hence strongest

⁶⁵ “Монголы... познакомились с буддизмом... еще при Чингис-хане, а может быть и ранее того. Монгольским племенам на заре их истории пришлось столкнуться с уйгурами... Среди уйгуров тогда были уже распространены мировые религии: христианство, магометанство и буддизм, который особенно был силен в восточной части областей, занятых уйгурами, значит, ближайших к монголам. От них-то монголы и позаимствовали свои первые понятия о буддизме, который... был принят многими”.

influence exerted by the Uyghur and Turkic nations of Central Asia [Kozin, 1940:11]. He also wrote, “there is no doubt that the Aramaean-Sogdian-Uyghur writing system, as well as Manichaeism, Nestorianism and Buddhism, were first to pass through the Oirats as the mediators...”⁶⁶ [Kozin, 1940:25]. The priority of the Uyghur over Tibetans and Chinese as their first teachers of Buddhism has been pointed out by such reputed Orientalists as Sh. Bira [Bira, 1978:143], G. Tsibikoff [Tsibikoff, 1991, II:28], D. Kara [Kara, 1972:22], A. Rona-Tas [Rona-Tas, 1965:121] and others.

Of considerable interest for the present discussion is “The Sweet Sound of the Shell”, Lama Lobsan Damdin’s work, who gives a clear periodization of the Buddhist history of the Mongolians. He points out that the first wave of influence came from the Uyghur, as “the wise Uyghur bakshi taught writing and reading to Mongolians and they also gave the sacred teachings of Buddha...”⁶⁷

Indeed, the Uyghur’s significant role in the development of the Oirat culture between the tenth and the twelfth centuries is evident. They had close cultural ties with all their neighbors [Yakubovsky, 1947:441]. Their alphabet, based on the Aramaean graphic system, was adopted by the Naimans and Kereits [Bartold, 1963, I:89; Rona-Tas, 1965:121]. It then spread among the Oirats who used this writing system to

⁶⁶ “Арамейско-согдо-уйгурское письмо, и манихейство, и несторианство, и буддизм, несомненно, должны были пройти сначала через ойратское посредство”.

⁶⁷ “Paksi mkhas pa mams kyis yu gur dang/ mon kol rnams la yi ge 'bri klog dang/ ston pa'i dam chos bka' bstan gsung rab rnams/ rang rang skad du bsgyur tsul ston cing bslabs/” [Blo bzang rta mgrin, sh. 5 rev.].

translate Buddhist literature into their mother language [Rinchen, 1974:93]. The Uyghur element can still be traced back in the Oirat (Kalmyk) clerical terminology. Khormusta, thirty three tengri and other deities of the Manichean pantheon passed on to Oirats through the Buddhist pantheon of these very people [Heissig, 1987:4-5].

Therefore, all circumstances led to situation, when Buddhism spread among the Oirats. Their history in the following centuries shows that everything in fact was quite favorable for the spread of the faith among those people. Both the character of Buddhist teachings and particular social-political circumstances accounted for this popularity. As far as the “attractive” side of Buddhism is concerned, S.F. Oldenburg once pointed out that, “Buddhism attracted its followers most of all because it taught to love people and... to forget about themselves; it taught them not to fear death, which was very important, as this very fear does not make a person’s life easy; besides, of no less importance is the fact that Buddhism taught an individual to always remember that they were responsible for their doings and even for the thoughts themselves and that only those who are fully aware of this responsibility live a real and good life”⁶⁸ [Oldenburg, 1919:6].

⁶⁸ “Буддизм привлекал больше всего тем, что учил любить людей и помогать им, не думая о себе, учил не бояться смерти, и это особенно важно, так как страх смерти не дает человеку спокойно жить; и еще, что не менее важно, буддизм учил человека всегда помнить, что он отвечает за свои поступки и даже за свои помыслы и что только тот, кто твердо сознает эту ответственность и понимает ее, живет настоящей, хорошей жизнью”.

Besides these characteristics of Buddhist teachings, there were other reasons involving the influence, first, of Central Asian Buddhist and, then, Tibetan Buddhist cultures on the Oirats. There were also a number of specific local factors conducive to the spread of Buddhism among the Oirats. First, the spread and establishment of the religion among the Western Mongolians coincided with the formation of the all-Mongolian statehood; second, it did not contradict the interests of the main social forces of the society; third, the influence of other religions as compared with that of Buddhism was weaker.

Another important and favorable factor was its exceptional tolerance of other faiths, thanks to which Buddhism peacefully coexisted with various local cults and moreover, adapted and accepted them into its own system. Thus, for example, the ideas of the Oirats about after-death life are a mixture of Buddhist ideas of the heavenly paradise with the shamanistic views of the underworld of their ancestors. Their other belief that the soul of the deceased can be found in an animal or another individual, which is of an even earlier, totemic origin, turned out to be close to the Buddhist views about “the incarnation of the soul”.

Thus Buddhism, on the one hand, enriched to a certain degree the local religious traditions and, on the other hand, it was transformed itself under their influence; as a result gradually finding common ground, Buddhism and folk faith were moving towards each other.

3.3. The Spread of Kagyu School among Oirats as the Second Stage of the Buddhist History of the Western Mongolians.

The first contact of the Mongolian speaking peoples with Tibetan Buddhism took place in the Tangut state (Xi-Xia).

It is known that the main ethnic group of its population was Tibetan and there were no definite borders between the Tangut state and Tibet. The geographic position of the country was exceptionally advantageous, and it had a considerable influence in Central Asia and served as a mediator between Tibetans and Oirats (Mongolians)⁶⁹. Sometimes Mongolians did not differentiate between the words ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tangut’ [Kyuner, 1907:4].

The Tangut had a highly developed culture. As the nearest neighbors of the Mongolian speaking tribes, including the Oirats, they established long-standing and steady ties with them. Mongolians borrowed many of their developments both in the economic and religious spheres; hence it is not surprising that the first information about the Tibetan variant of Buddhism came to the Mongolians through the Tangut.

⁶⁹ Prof. V. Vasilev's observation that if we knew the complete history of the Xi-Xia state "...on the basis of indigenous sources ... we would have a less obscure picture of the history of Western Mongolia" ("на основании туземных источников... то не были бы в недоумении насчет истории Западной Монголии") [Vasilev, 1857:87], still holds true despite a number of works published both in Russia and abroad recently. Y. Roerich noted that "Mongols of the imperial period had a good knowledge of the Tibetan culture via the Tangut kingdom" ("через тангутское царство монголы времен империи были хорошо знакомы с тибетской культурой" [Roerich, 1958:340].

Buddhism was widespread in Xi-Xia state⁷⁰, which existed from 1032 to 1227. Their long-standing ties with Tibet were not only economic and military (for instance, the guards in the capital Khara-Khoto consisted of Tibetan soldiers) but also religious. Tibetan Buddhism had a dominant position⁷¹, and especially wide spread were various Kagyu sub-schools⁷².

There is evidence that such Kagyu sub-schools as the Drikung, Karma and Tshal had a predominant influence in Xi-Xia. The Tangut had an institution of State Tutors (as a rule, these were Tibetan monks) which was later borrowed by the Mongol khans and played an important role in the Buddhist history of both the Mongols and Oirats. In the early thirteenth century such a State Tutor was Tsangpopa

⁷⁰ Besides Buddhism (Tibetan, Uyghur and Chinese), Daoism, Nestorian Christianity and other faiths were spread here; see, for example [Pigulevskaya, 1940, I:213].

⁷¹ The presence of the Tibetan monks in Xi-Xia was discussed by R. A. Stein when he wrote about the contacts between the Karma and Tangut court: [Stein, 1966:281-289]. For the contacts of the Tangut with the Sakya see: [Kwanten, 1972:52].

⁷² One of the engravings in the Tangut treatise “Rules of a Sermon in the Temple of the Beneficent and Compassionate One” “... represents a spiritual figure of the high rank... The monk has a tall hat on his head with flaps and ‘wings’... Such hats can be seen on the icons in the collection of the State Hermitage. They are of different colors: red, yellow, black and white rimmed” (“изображено духовное лицо высокого ранга... На голове монаха — высокая шапка с отворотами и ‘крыльями’... Такие же шапки мы видим и на иконах в коллекции Государственного Эрмитажа. Там они имеют различные цвета: встречаются шапки красные, желтые, черные с белой каймой”) [Terentyev-Katansky, 1993:66]. Such hats with flaps and “wings” were usually worn only by the Kagyu hierarchy, for instance, by the Karma monks.

Konchok Senge (Gtsang po pa dkon mchog seng ge, ?-1218/1219), a monk of the Karma Kagyu School. His successor was Tishri Sangye Richen (Ti shri sangs rgyas ras chen, 1164/1165-1236), a monk of the Barom Kagyu School ('ba' rom pa) [Sperling, 1987:34]. The lamas of this School were also represented at the Mongol court.

There is a view quite widespread in the historiography dealing with the Buddhist history of the Mongols and Oirats, according to which the most important role in the religious situation of the period is ascribed to the Sakya School, sometimes to the Karma School. However, this opinion contradicts the facts contained in the Tibetan primary sources. Thus relying on the evidence of the monastic chronicles of different Schools of Tibetan Buddhism, G. Tucci [Tucci, 1949, I:9] made his conclusion that in fact the most influential School at the time was that of Tshal Kagyu⁷³. It was this School that started to spread its teachings among the Oirats and Mongolians.

While dealing with a brief history of the Tshal Kagyu school, "The Red Annals", for instance, notably refers to Tsang-pa Dungpur-pa Wangchuk Tashi (Gtsang pa dung khur ba dbang phyug bkra shis) [Tshal pa kun dga rdo rje brtsams, 1981:130], the famous religious teacher: "Tsang-pa Dungpur-pa Wangchuk Tashi...a pupil of Shang (Rinpoche) was at the time invited ...to Minyak to spread the teachings of the Tsal Kagyu. After the Minyak state had been subjugated by

⁷³ Y. Roerich pointed out that in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the Tsal Kagyu School played an exceptional role in Mongolian-Tibetan interactions [Roerich, 1958:336].

Genghis Khan, he... gave his teachings to the Mongol ruler who then sent him to the Sog to teach them the Tsal Kagyu doctrine”⁷⁴.

The priority of the Tsal over other closely related Kagyu sub-schools in propagating its teachings among the Mongolian speaking peoples was pointed out in the famous “Buddhist Transmission History” by Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa: “It is probable that the Tshal preceded the Sakya and Karma (in Mongolia – B.K.). Shang Rinpoche’s pupils - Tsang-pa Dungpur-pa and seven others - went to Khor (i.e. Mongolia – B.K.) where they stayed on retreat”⁷⁵.

Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa insists on the contacts that existed between the Great Khagan and the Tshal Kagyu monk: while Minyak was being conquered Genghis Khan “destroyed many temples and then Tsang-pa went to the Khan... he gave his sacred teachings to him and explained that the well-being of all human beings depends on the teachings. As a result of this Genghis felt a deep respect for the teachings...”⁷⁶. He

⁷⁴ “Gtsang pa dung khur ba dbang phyug bkra shis gung thang bla ma zhang gi slob ma/ thog mar shis zhva rgyal po'i bla mar gdan bzangs te mi nyag gi yul du thsal pa bka' brgyud kyi chos lugs thog mar spel/ rjes su jing gir han gyis shis zhva (mi nyag) rgyal khab gtor rjes sog yul du gdan drangs nas jing gir han la chos gsungs te sog yul du thai pa bka' brgyud kyi chos lungs thog mar spel/” [Tshal pa kun dga rdo rje brtsams, 1981:452].

⁷⁵ “Sa kar gnyis las kyang mtshal pa'i bstan pa byung ba snga bar snang ste/ zhang rin po che'i slob ma gtsang pa dung khur pa dpon slob bdun gyis hor yul du byon nas ri khrod la bzhugs/” [Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng bas brtsams pa, 1986, II:1414].

⁷⁶ “Gtsug lag khang mang du bshig bstan pa nyams rnams pa'i tshe bla ma gtsang pas rgyal po'i drung du byon te rgyal pos kyang gnam mchod thams cad kyi gral mgor bton sgos kyi sbyin bdag dza yin/jing gi rgyal po la lo tsa bsgyur nas rgyu 'bras dang chos kyi che ba bshad nas sems can

issued an edict, the first Mongol “yasa” according to which, lamas were exempted from paying taxes and military service; other measures to protect the Buddhist religion were introduced as well, such as the restoration of the Tangut monasteries which had suffered during the military operations [Bira, 1964:35].

Thus such important primary sources like “The Red Annals” by Kunga Dorje and “Buddhist Transmission History” by Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa contain the earliest evidence concerning Genghis Khan’s meeting with the representatives of the Tibetan Buddhist Tsal Kagyu sub-school in 1227. However, there is no exhaustive answer to the question whether the Khagan himself had embraced Buddhism. Thus according to the primary sources cited above, Genghis Khan became a Buddhist. This opinion was supported by the Tibetan and Mongolian historians of the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries in their works [Bira, 1978:184; Heissig, 1959:43-44].

The scholars’ opinion is quite opposite. Thus pointing out the apparent influence of the more developed nations on the Mongols, V. Bartold noted that despite his close ties with the representatives of these cultures, Genghis Khan remained to be a shamanist [Bartold, 1963, I:458]. H. Howorth also pointed out that Genghis Khan was a shamanist, though he and his successors continued their contacts with the lamas and wrote letters to them [Howorth, 1876:506]. For instance, there is evidence in the historical literature that the Great

gyi bde skyid sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la rag/ bstan pa la rgyal pos bkur
sti byed dgos/” [Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng bas brtsams pa, 1986, II:1415].

Khagan kept in touch with Sina-Gebshi Lama from Tangut [Dugarov, 1983:12-13]. Moreover, “there were lamas in the Genghis Khan’s own family who achieved great prominence; such as Khutukhta-mungur, his cousin’s grandfather and Khutukhta-jurki, his uncle”⁷⁷ [Kiselyov et al., 1965:57].

G. Vernadsky points out the tolerance of diverse religious beliefs characteristic of the founder of the Mongol Empire. Since Genghis Khan did not follow any creed, writes Vernadsky, in “Great Yasa” (Mongol Law) he avoided fanaticism and showed no preference to any of the faiths, and “ordered that all religions were to be respected and that no preference was to be shown to any of them” [Vernadsky, 1953:102].

In our opinion, most convincing is the point of view formulated by Sh. Bira who believed that for all his impartiality in the treatment of diverse faiths, Genghis-khan nevertheless favored Buddhism [Cit op.: Douglas, Conger, 1962:331]. This was apparently taken into consideration when Godan (Ugedei’s son and brother of Guyuk Khagan) decided to send a mission to Tibet with an invitation to the most learned lama. According to the Tibetan primary sources, among the candidates were the heads of the Drikung Kagyu, Taglun Kagyu and Sakya schools [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:35]. The expedition undertaken in 1240 resulted in a visit paid in 1245 by the famous Sakya Pandit Kunga Gyaltsan⁷⁸, who had a meeting with Godan only two years

⁷⁷ “среди родичей Чингисхана были ламы, достигшие высоких степеней; например, его двоюродный дед был Хутухта-мунгур, а его дядя — Хутухта-чжурки”.

⁷⁸ T.V. Wylie notes that the Tibetan primary sources themselves point out

later. This was how the alliance between the Sakya and Mongols was made. It should be noted that in fact this Tibetan School did not have any serious influence in Amdo, Kham and other northern parts of Tibet, as well as among the Oirats, despite the fact that later, under Kublai's rule, the heads of Sakya were appointed to be the "Tibetan kings".

The religious situation by the mid-thirteenth century is characterized by the Mongol Khans' decisions in favor of the lamas of various Tibetan Buddhist schools as their spiritual teachers. Here is how Sumba Khambo describes the situation in his "Pagsam-jonsan": "To sum up, in the earth-swine year of the fourth rab byung (1239) the Sakya, Brigon (i.e. Drikung – B.K.), Pagdu (i.e. Pagmodu – B.K.) and Tsal, each of them separately, 'had a vision of the countenance' of their corresponding Mongol Khan..."⁷⁹ [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:40]⁸⁰. According to "History of Tibet" by the 5th Dalai Lama, in the mid-thirteenth century some Kagyu sub-schools established "Teacher-Pupil" relationships with Tolui's sons and other khans: the Drikung had this relationship with Mongke, the Tsal with Kublai and the Pagmodu with Hulagu⁸¹. The Tibetan primary sources also refer to Ariq

that Sakya Pandita stood out among the rest of lamas as the most knowledgeable one in the religious matters. Maybe that was the reason he was chosen as the Godan's spiritual tutor [Wylie, 1977:112].

⁷⁹ "Если резюмировать, то в год земли-свиньи четвертого рабджуна (1239 г.) Сакья, Бригон, Пагду и Цал каждый в отдельности "узрели лик" соответствующего монгольского хана".

⁸⁰ In the "Chronological Tables" Sumba Khambo refers to the Karma instead of the Tshal [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:78].

⁸¹ "De yang mon khor rgyal pos 'bri gung pa sa chen (Sachen Khan is another name for Kublai. — Б.К.) rgyal pos tshal pa/ hu la bus phag mo gru pa rnams so sor mchod gnas su bzung ste/" [Ngag dbang blo bzang

Boke as the patron of the Taglun Kagyu [Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng bas brtsams pa, 1986, II:1416]. It should be also noted that in accordance with the chosen School, the territory in Tibet where it exerted its influence was under the rule of each of these khans.

By that time Karma Bakshi, the second chief of the Karma Kagyu School, had stood out as the most famous figure in Tibet. Thanks to his energetic efforts this branch of Tibetan Buddhism spread widely in the Mongolian world. In 1255 he had a meeting with Kublai; in 1256 he became the Mongke Khagan's personal tutor. "Karma Bakshi is said to have converted Mongke from Nestorian Christianity to Tibetan Buddhism" [Wylie, 1977:120]. This is how it is described in Pawo Tsuglag Trengwa's book: "A few years earlier (before Pagba became the Kublai's lama – B.K.) Karma Bakshi gave a teaching to the Mongor Khan (Mongke Khan – B.K.), so that the Khan became kind-hearted..."⁸².

According to the Karma primary sources, the people came from China, Khor (Mongolians), Sog (Oirats) and Minyak (Tangut) to listen to this great lama [Richardson, 1958:143]. But Karma Bakshi's political mistake was that he had made an alliance with Mongke Khan, preferring him to Kublai. He had refused to stay at the Kublai's court not long before Mongke's death in 1260. In 1261 when Kublai proclaimed himself the Great Khagan he sent the monk who fell in

rgya mtsho, 1967:63].

⁸² "Di'i gong gi lo bshi lnga na grub thob chen po karma pak shis rgyal po mong gor gan la chos gsungs byin gyis brlabs pas rgyal po 'khor bcas seims gdzung 'jin las grol" [Dpa' bo gtsug lag phrengs bas brtsams pa, 1986, II:1419].

disfavor into exile [Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng bas brtsams pa, 1986, II:1421]. Kublai developed close ties with Drogon Chogyal Pagba, Sakya Pandit's nephew ('Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa, known also as 'Phags pa blo gras rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280), who had visited the Mongol court more than once with his uncle. Therefore, whether he wanted that or not, Karma Bakshi sided with Ariq Boke [Richardson, 1958:144; Rossabi, 1988:143], who waged a war against his brother Kublai for the Mongol throne.

The Oirats, who were not part of the Yuan state, supported Ariq Boke, the legal heir to the throne of Mongol Khagans. Later they also continued to fight against the Mongols.

Since the religious views of the Oirats were inseparable from their political considerations and had an impact on the specific character of the situation of the time, it is necessary to deal with the issue of Tibetan Buddhism among the Oirats who left in considerable numbers with Hulagu for Persia [Gaban Sharab, 1969:144; Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:19], where they were to play rather an important role. Rashid-al-Din notably pointed out that "in Iran and Turan⁸³ there were and still are many people from the emirs of the Oirat tribe, but who belongs to which clan is known only to them"⁸⁴

⁸³ Turan, the term, which usually refers to the Turkic speaking Central Asia, here should be associated with modern Turkey. The Oirat component in the ethnogenesis of modern Turks could be traced back, for instance, in the ethnic background of the former Prime minister and President of Turkey in the 80s and early 90s of the twentieth century Turgut Ozal whose family name means Ozal of the Turgut (Torgout) clan.

⁸⁴ "В Иране и Туране было и есть множество [людей] из числа эмиров ойратского племени, однако неизвестно, кто какой ветви, только они между собою знают свое происхождение".

[Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:120]. According to Ven. Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche's evidence, at the Ilkhans' court⁸⁵ a significant role was played by the Torgouts⁸⁶, who made up half of the total number of the Oirats living in Persia. Thus Argun-aka, the Oirat, had a great power in Iran; "he had arrived in this kingdom before Hulagu Khan to take the position of a bitikchi in accordance with the Mongke Khan's edict"⁸⁷ [Rashid-al-Din, 1946:22], and "gradually had big power, became honorable and finally achieved the control over the country of Iran"⁸⁸ [Rashid-al-Din, 1952, I, book 1:121].

Thus even a very general study of Buddhism of the Oirats and Mongols in Iran will help to disclose another obscure page in the history of the cultural life of the Western Mongolians in their early Buddhist period. In historiography the issue of Buddhism in Ilhanid Iran was studied in "The Cambridge History of Iran" [The Cambridge History, 1968] and B. Spuler's monograph [Spuler, 1997]. Quite interesting research on Mongols' ideology was recently published by A. Broadbridge [Broadbridge, 2008], but she didn't make an emphasis on Buddhist part of Mongolian history.

⁸⁵ The Ilkhan (or Hulaguid) dynasty in Persia (1256-1335) was founded by Hulagu.

⁸⁶ Torgout, or Turgout-Keshikten, the military class and Genghis Khan's bodyguards, came to form an ethnic group of the Torgout in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

⁸⁷ "до Хулагу хана прибыл в сие царство в должности битикчия по указу Мэнгу каана".

⁸⁸ "постепенно становился большим и уважаемым человеком, пока не достиг правления и баскакства над страной Ирана".

It is quite easy to account for the importance of Tibetan Buddhism in Persia: this way the Mongols and Oirats made efforts to maintain their specific identity in a strange cultural environment. Similarly, in China the Mongols preferred Tibetan to Chinese Buddhism. The difference in the worldview of the Mongol conquerors and their Muslim cultural environment resulted in strengthening of the ties between Hulagu Khan and Tibet. In fact we mean those regions of Tibet which were under the influence of the schools maintaining contacts with the Khan (such as Ladakh, Kashmir) [Petech, 1939; Kwanten, 1972:128]. Besides, another important factor was that the Oirats of Persia preserved their ties with their motherland, i.e. Dzungaria.

In this context it becomes quite clear why the ethnonym “Kalmuk” for the ethnic group appeared in the late fourteenth century. This may be accounted for by the fact that while those Mongols and Oirats who stayed in Persia finally adopted Islam (as well as in other West-Asian regions) in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the Oirats of Dzungaria remained Buddhists, “barbarians”, hence in the eyes of the Muslims they were “Kalmuks” (“non-conformists”)⁸⁹. In fact, this point of view is not quite new, it was formulated, for example, by V. Bartold [Bartold, 1968, V:538] and was supported by Ts. Nominkhanov, the reputed Kalmyk scholar [Nominkhanov, 1958:100]. The latter points out that the Oirats were named “Kalmuks” by Turks, their

⁸⁹ According to other scholars (see, for example [Erdniev, 1980:90]), the word “kalmyk” had the meaning “remain”, “lag behind” “the remaining part” and thus came to be referred to the Oirats who had separated from the rest of the Mongolian world.

neighbors, only because of the fact that the Oirat-Mongolians would not accept Islam to remain shamanists or Buddhists”⁹⁰. To support his argument Ts. Nominkhanov draws a parallel with the Uyghur, another Central Asian people. Thus he points out that “it is notable that those Uyghur who remained loyal to Buddhism, their old faith, got the name of ‘kalganlar’ (infinitive: Kalmyk), i.e. ‘those remaining’, while those Uyghur who accepted Islam came to be known as ‘yangانلار’, i.e. ‘those who turned’ (to ‘the true faith’)”⁹¹ [Ibid. cit]. The origin of the term “Kalmyk” is dated back by the scholar to the period between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

Hulagu Khan who had ruled in Iran since 1256 kept alive the ties with Tibet till his death in 1265. In “The Red Annals” there is the information that Hulagu sent presents to Gyalva Rinpoche Dragpa Tsонду (Rgyal ba rin po che grags pa brtson 'grus), the head of the Pagmodu School⁹². The last mission reached Rinpoche in the beginning of 1267 [Tshal pa kun dga rdo rje brtsams, 1981:122]. According to L. Petech, the head of the Drikung School whose name was Chennga Dragpa Chungne (Spyan snga grags pa 'byung gnas) also received many presents from Hulagu Khan [Petech,

⁹⁰ “‘калмаками’ только потому, что ойрат-монголы не приняли ислам, а остались шаманистами, или буддистами”.

⁹¹ “Характерно, что те уйгуры, которые остались верными своей старой религии буддизму, получили прозвище ‘калганлар’ (инфinitив: калмак), то есть оставшиеся, а другие уйгуры, которые последовали религии ислама, получили кличку ‘янганлар’, то есть вернувшиеся (к ‘справедливой вере’)”.

⁹² I. Petrushevsky was mistaken when he assumed that Hulagu Khan was the patron of the Sakya School [Petrushevsky, 1970:249].

1983:183]. Thus it may be concluded that the Oirats and Mongols of Iran followed the Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism (including Pagmodu, Tsal, Drikung, Karma and other sub-schools).

In the early sixties of the thirteenth century the Pagmodu had close ties with the Drikung which after the Mongke Khagan's death needed another patron and that was to become Hulagu Khan. Here we need to remember the circumstances of the early days of Kublai's rule to understand the course of these events. After ascending to the Chinese throne, Kublai forbade his brothers to have their representatives in Tibet and continue their contacts with the lamas. Only Hulagu, who was on friendly terms with Kublai, preserved his influence on some part of Tibet. The Kagyu sub-schools did not see Kublai as their partner. They remembered the hardships Karma Bakshi had to go through because of the Yuan Emperor [Roerich, 1976:485-487]. Besides, as has been mentioned, since 1253 when Kublai was given the teaching of the Sakya School, he had started to support this direction.

The rule, or rather the religious predilections of the first Ilkhans, resulted in the changes in the gamut of the religious views both of the population of Persia and of the conquerors themselves. It should also be noted that, in general, the complete subjugation of Persia and fall of Baghdad in 1278 was perceived by the contemporaries of the events as a global catastrophe. In Persia, formerly dominated by the Sunni, the Shiite started to take the upper hand as they managed to win the favor of the new rulers (for example, Hulagu had a Shiite councilor whose name was Nazir al-din Tusi). The Sunni and

Shiite continued to fight against each other for the influence on the Ilkhan but their victories were never complete. Thus the most important of the successful campaigns of the Sunni, who were in fact gradually forced to yield, was the siege and complete destruction by Hulagu Ilkhan's army of the fort in Alamut (in the north-west of Persia), the nest of the medieval political-state terrorism and the stronghold of the so called Assassins, the followers of Ismailism, one of the Shiite branches⁹³.

As far as other religious beliefs in Persia are concerned, it should be noted that Nestorian Christians and Judaists still preserved their influence there. In this intense spiritual atmosphere of the time the Mongols and Oirats practically turned away from their Shamanism.

Iran at the time of the first Ilkhans had Buddhist pagodas and temples everywhere, lamas and Buddhist teachers were invited from Tibet and India. In his description of the Mongol conquerors, such as Hulagu Ilkhan, Gandzaketi points out the religious aspect of the nomads as well. In particular, the historian focuses on the Toins, Buddhist monks including both Tibetan and Mongolian lamas: "Besides, [Hulagu] has built dwellings for giant idols, collecting for the purpose all kinds of craftsmen who worked with stone and wood and painters as well. These [toins] are wizards and magicians; they can use their magic skills to make horses and camels talk, as well as the dead people and felt pictures. All of them

⁹³ Ismailism has remained in the Pamir in Afghanistan, the Iranian Ismailits immigrated to India. Their present leader is known under the name of Aga Khan IV.

are priests and shave their heads and beards, and wear yellow robes and worship everything, but most of all Shakmoni (i.e. Buddha Shakyamuni – B.K.) and Madrid (i.e. Bodhisattva Maitreya – B.K.)”⁹⁴ [Gandzaketi Kirakos, 1976:239].

In his work Vardan the Great, as well as Gandzaketi, describes the religious predilections of Hulagu: “He was deceived by astrologers and priests of some pictures, called Shakmunia, who, as they say, was a God living for 3040 years and will be still living for another 37 t’umans (a t’uman equals 10, 000 years). They say he will be succeeded by another (God) whose name is Mandrin. The priests whom he believed and followed to decide whether to wage a war or not were called Doins”⁹⁵ [Vardan the Great].

The interaction between Buddhism and Islam resulted in strengthening of the Sufi direction both in Sunni and Shiite; thus the scholars point out the roots of Buddhist tantra and psycho-techniques in the origin and development of Sufism.

⁹⁴ “И еще построил [Хулагу] обиталища для огромных идолов, собрав там всяких мастеров: и по камню, и по дереву, и художников. Есть [у них] племя одно, называемое тоинами. Эти [тоины] — волхвы и колдуны, они своим колдовским искусством заставляют говорить лошадей и верблюдов, мертвых и войлочные изображения. Все они — жрецы, бреют волосы на голове и бороды, носят на груди желтые фелоны и поклоняются всему, а паче всего — Шакмонии и Мадриду”.

⁹⁵ “Его обманывали астрологи и жрецы каких-то изображений, называемых Шакмуния, который, говорят, есть бог, живущий 3040 лет, которому предстоит жить еще 37 т’уманов (каждый т’уман равняется 10,000 лет). Говорят, что ему наследует другой (бог), по имени Мандрин. Жрецы, в которых он веровал и по приказанию которых он шел или не шел на войну, назывались доинами”.

With Hulagu Khan's death in 1265 the contacts of the Ilkhans with Tibet did not stop immediately but the advance of the Muslim orthodoxy undermined the stability of these ties. After Qasan's conversion to Islam in 1295 Buddhism was banned [Petech, 1983:183]. According to L. Gumilyov, the Mongols (he also included Oirats in their number) of Iran adopted Islam "because the fierce military hostilities at the time prevented them from returning home. Their descendants, the Hazara, still live in the steppe zone of Afghanistan"⁹⁶ [Gumilyov, 1993:127].

Thus since the mid-thirteenth century the Kagyu had been in a difficult situation as the School had lost all its former patrons (Mongke Khagan died in 1259, Ariq Boke stopped his military campaign against Kublai in 1264 and Hulagu Ilkhan's death followed in 1265). At the same time it felt more the pressure exerted by the Sakya School. Under the circumstances the Kagyu sub-schools again turned their attention to the Central Asian Khans (as a rule, from the family of Ugedei, Genghis Khan's third son) such as Haidu, Duva and others. Since the majority of the population under these khans' rule were Western Mongolian clans, one should date back to this very time - the sixties and seventies of the thirteenth century – the beginning of the spread of this Tibetan Buddhist tradition among them.

⁹⁶ "так как из-за бушевавшей войны не могли вернуться домой. Их потомки — хазарейцы — ныне живут в степной части Афганистана". The Hazara notably live in the Bamyan area which used to have the two world famous Buddha statues, destroyed by the Taliban forces in March 2001. According the evidences, during the Afghan war (1979-1989) the Soviet soldiers found a few villages (kishlaks) with population spoke in Oirat language.

This hypothesis is supported by the evidence of a remarkable event of the late thirteenth century. This was the Western Mongolians' (Oirats') participation in the uprising of the Drikung Kagyu School against the Sakya School, which took place in 1285-1290. According to "Pagsam-jonsan" "... in the wood-hen year (1285)...Brigon (i.e. Drikung – B.K.) led an army of the Upper Mongols against the Sakya"⁹⁷ [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:40]. The Tibetan primary sources give a description of the rebel army as that of "the Upper Mongols" (stod hor) [Tucci, 1949, I:16, 253]. Moreover, they point out that they were an army of "Hu-la". Thus according to the Tibetan chronicles, it appears that Hulagu was still alive in 1290 while he died in February of 1265 which has been mentioned above.

According to R. Pubayev, the majority of the Drikung army was the Mongolians of Western Tibet [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:175] which was under the Hulagu's rule. However, this point of view does not seem to be quite convincing. After the Hulagu's death the ties between Persia and Tibet were never the same; besides the first Ilkhans were on close and friendly terms with Kublai and therefore it seems very doubtful that their vassals could have been involved in a war against the Emperor's army. In this case "the Upper Mongols" seem to be in fact the Oirats of the Eastern Turkistan and Dzungaria who had supported Ariq Boke, Haidu, as well as Duva (a Khan from Chagatai's family) in their wars against Kublai [Gumilyov, 1994:273]. In the war of 1285-1290 the Oirats of

⁹⁷ "В год дерева-курицы (1285 г.)... Бригон привела войска верхних монголов против Сакья".

Haidu were on the Kagyu side [Kwanten, 1972:131]; or, according to other scholars, these were Duva's forces (however, they add, that Duva was Haidu's puppet) [Petech, 1983:189, 201; Rossabi, 1988:222; Wylie, 1977:131-132]. Besides, in "Yuan shi" there is a reference to the military campaign of 1290 in which the military leader Temur-Buga was engaged against Haidu [Wylie, 1977:130].

The roots of the conflict date back to the mid-thirteenth century, to the time of an alliance made between Haidu and Arik Boke. As early as 1269 by the river Talash, Haidu announced himself the Khagan but all his efforts to prove his right to the Mongol throne failed. In 1301 he was killed. The conflict between the sides continued up to 1317 when the Yuan forces finally managed to occupy Dzungaria, i.e. Eastern Turkistan, but then they left the region for reasons which still remain unknown [Allsen, 1983:259-261].

To sum up, the religious views of the Oirats in the period of the Yuan dynasty and before were formed under the influence of rich cultural traditions, characteristic of the societies and states in the medieval Central Asia. A synthesis of religious and spiritual ideas and concepts made it easy for the Western Mongolian tribes to embrace the main Buddhist ideas.

The early Buddhist history of the Oirats can be traced back to the Mongols' first contacts with the Central Asian populations; besides, the identification of the ethnic groups involved in the process will contribute to a more profound understanding of the historic role of Buddhism for the nations of Central Asia. Thus it should be noted that despite the

important cultural impact of the Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhism succeeded in gaining ground among the Western Mongolians. The Tibetan lamas were prepared to face the type of mentality characteristic of the nomads; in fact, according to D. Snellgrove, by that time the Tibetan nomads had adapted Buddhism to the perceptions and sensibilities of a nomad, while the monks propagating their teachings among the Mongols had had enough experience of the culture of the cattle breeders and knew how to take over the shamans. The British scholar also points out that the reasons for a rather quick success of the Tibetans in the spiritual life of Mongols can be accounted for by the personal charisma and extraordinary abilities of the great lamas, who managed to successfully compete with the teachings and cults of such religions as Christianity (Nestorian and Catholic), Islam and Daoism, as well as the Mongolian shamanism [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:150-151].

CHAPTER IV. TIBETAN BUDDHISM OF THE WESTERN MONGOLIANS BETWEEN THE FIFTEENTH AND THE MID-SEVENTEETH CENTURIES

4.1. Buddhism of the Eastern and Western Mongolians

up to the mid-fifteenth century

There is the widespread view in historiography that under the Yuan dynasty only Sakya was the preeminent Buddhist school both among the Mongolians and in Tibet. This is to largely overlook that originally many Tibetan Buddhist lineages were represented in the capital of the Celestial Empire. One of the first among them was the Tshal Kagyu School which played an important role at the imperial court and propagated its teachings not only among the Eastern Mongolians but also among the Oirats.

There is a direct reference in the Mongolian treatise “Jiruken-u tolta-yin Tayilburi” to the fact that under Mongke Khagan’s rule “Tshalba (i.e. of the School of Tshal – B.K.) Lama Garma-Duysum-Djinba and others were invited from Tangut... This was how the combination of the secular power and the religious faith had been reached”⁹⁸ [Baldanzhapov, 1962:64].

⁹⁸ “Цалбаский лама Гарма-Дуйсум-Джинба и другие... Так было

At the Kublai's court there were also many "Tsalba lamas" but the Khan failed to agree with them "on the point of animate beings"⁹⁹ [Baldanzhapov, 1962:65-66]. The situation changed with the invitation to the court of a representative of the Sakya school – Drogön Chögyal Phagba, the Sakya Pandita's nephew, already mentioned above; the Khan was impressed by the Phagba's knowledge and education. This is how it happened according to the Mongolian treatise cited above: "At this moment the Khan's chief wife said to him, 'We have many Tsalba lamas, but there is no one among them who is as educated as this modest and humble bandi. That is why, I assume, after having another conversation [with him] the Khan should appoint [him] the chief lama [yeke bla-ma]'"¹⁰⁰ [Baldanzhapov, 1962:66].

Kublai and Phagba lama were quite interested in each other as by 1253, when Kublai invited Phagba to his court, Godan, the former patron of Sakya had died. Mongke, the new Khagan, impressed by the Tshal monks' capabilities, had shown no interest in Phagba's School.

It should be noted that in his childhood, Phagba with Sakya Pandit, had visited the Mongol court and had thus been strongly influenced by Mongolian ideas. He was therefore quite aware of the scope and power of the expanding empire. Of interest here is W. Heissig's opinion where he pointed out

достигнуто сочетание светского правления и веры".

⁹⁹ "по своим взглядам на одушевленные существа".

¹⁰⁰ "У нас цалбаских лам много, но среди них нет ни одного ламы с таким образованием, как этот скромный банди. Поэтому, как я полагаю, хаган, побеседовав [с ним] еще раз, должен назначить [его] верховным ламой [yeke bla-ma]".

that Kublai “wanted to hold a representative of the Sa skya pa then ruling Tibet in his vicinity as a pledge for a friendly attitude on Tibet’s part. Phags pa... thus came to the Mongolian court as a hostage” [Heissig, 1987:24]. Since that time the Sakya school had started to strengthen its positions, somewhat weakened as a result of the Sakya Pandita’s death in 1251 and the Godan’s death which followed soon after.

According to one of the first Kublai’s edicts of 1260, Pagba lama became the “gushi” (“go-shi”) (the State Tutor - kuo-shih) and was granted the power over the thirteen provinces in Tibet [Huth, 1892, I:99]. It should be noted, however, that the Eastern and North-Eastern Tibet (Kham and Amdo) were not under the Pagba lama’s rule [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:35, 168 (ref. 316)]. According to the authors of “A Cultural History of Tibet”, the Sakya power was limited by Lhasa and the territory adjoining the capital of Tibet in the west [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:180].

In 1264 the Kublai’s order followed that the state administration had a special department on Tibetan affairs (t’sung-chih yuan) added to it, with the State Tutor as the head of the department. The title of this supreme religious position was changed into “dishi” (ti-shih — Imperial Tutor) in 1270 while “tsung-chi yuan” itself was finally established in 1288 and since then it had been called “hsuan-cheng yuan”, the department for Buddhist affairs. Thankful for such generous patronage, the Sakya hierarchy identified Kublai with Bodhisattva Manjushri and granted him the title of “Chakravartin”, the “One turning the (Teaching’s) wheel” [Rossabi, 1988:144-145].

It was under the Kublai's rule that the concept of the "two powers", i.e. the unity of the secular and spiritual ones¹⁰¹, had its complete development. This concept of power is described in full in "A White History - Tsagan Tuuji" (its full Mongolian title is as follows: "Arban buyantu nom-un cagan teuke" – "A White History of Ten Virtues"). As T. Skrinnikova points out, this book "sums up the ideas about religion and statehood which have originated and fully developed within the framework of the Buddhist teachings for many a century"¹⁰² [Skrinnikova, 1988:12]. According to the theory, the supreme lama has no right to interfere in secular affairs while, in return, the Khagan ensures the former has the complete power as far the theory and practice of the teachings are concerned.

Thus, the interactions between Tibet and China developed into an alliance known as "yon mchod", according to which, the supreme lama was to become the religious tutor and teacher of the emperor; and the latter was to take decisions about Tibet only after consulting the lama. The main objective of the teachings, i.e. the achievement of complete freedom, was to be fulfilled by the Khagan maintaining peace and order, and by the lama taking responsibilities for propagating sutras and dharani and their study. The lama was

¹⁰¹ In "History of Tibet" by the 5th Dalai Lama it is pointed out that "the relationship between the Sakya and the Mongol Khan was built on the 'Teacher-Tutor and Pupil-Almsgiver' principle which contributed to the power of the Empire" — [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1967:108].

¹⁰² "мы видим обобщение тех идей о религии и государстве, которые на протяжении многих веков зарождались и вызревали в рамках буддийского учения".

recognized as the live Buddha while the Khagan was the Chakravartin.

For the first time this wording appeared in a Sakya Pandit's letter citing Godan who said, if he secures the peace in the world by means of the secular law (mi chos) and Lama do the same by means of the sacred law (lha chos), then there would be the spread of the Shakyamuni teachings beyond the borders of the "outer ocean". Khagan asked to propagate the teachings in peace and tranquility of mind while he would provide Lama with everything [Tucci, 1949, vol. 1, p. 10-12]. According to Sh. Bira, the concept of the "two principles of the state administration were first developed by this very lama (Pagba) on the Kublai Khagan's urgent request. Of course, Pagba relied both on the Buddhist ethical-moral teachings and on the old Indian and Tibetan traditions"¹⁰³ [Bira, 1978:87]. But still earlier B. Shakabpa had pointed out that the principle under study was a uniquely Central Asian concept of the lama-patron interactions [Shakabpa, 1967:71].

It is most likely that the beginnings of this kind of relationships (Mongolian-Tibetan ones, in particular) are to be found in the status of the Tshal Kagyu school which it used to have at the Tangut court. It has been mentioned above that the monks of this and other Kagyu sub-schools used to take the position of the State Tutors in Xi-Xia. While relating the Tshal history, Sumba Khambo notably pointed out "the tutor-ruler" institution [Pubayev, 1981:176]: the

¹⁰³ "двах принципов государственного управления была впервые разработана именно этим ламой (Пагба) по настоянию Хубилай-Хагана. Пагба, конечно, опирался как на буддийское этико-моральное учение, так и на древнеиндийские и тибетские традиции".

senior monk in the Guntang (gung than) monastery was at the same time the secular governor of the same district.

The provisions of “Tsagan Tuuji” concerning the state administration made great impact on the dynasty’s close circles. Thus describing the rule of Uldzeitu, Gegen, Togon-Temur emperors, Sagang Sechen pointed out that they equally adhered to the two laws [Schmidt, 1829:120, 122; Chang, 1985]. Similar evidence was cited concerning the Chakhar Ligdan Khan [Schmidt, 1829:202] and the Tumet Altan Khan [Schmidt, 1829:234].

Various Buddhist schools were represented at the Yuan court. The Tibetan primary sources point out that throughout the Yuan epoch many of the Sakya and Karma Kagyu lamas visited the court to get their titles of “dishi” (“gushi”) there [Das, 1984:153]. Under the Yuans, Uyghur Buddhism also enjoyed considerable support, and Uyghurs had an influence not only on political decisions but also on the cultural achievements of Mongols. V. Bartold noted that “the first Mongols’ teachers and the first officials in the Mongol Empire administration were Uyghurs”¹⁰⁴ [Bartold, 1963, I:453]. Besides, the representatives of the Uyghur intelligentsia in the Mongols’ service mostly belonged to the Buddhist clergy [Bartold, 1963, I:454]. By the Yuan epoch Uyghur Buddhism had already been under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism as the small Tibetan states had been the southern and south-eastern neighbors of Uyghurs since the mid-ninth century, i.e. since the time the latter formed their

¹⁰⁴ “Первыми учителями монголов и первыми чиновниками монгольской империи были уйгуры”.

states in Nanshan mountain region (Gansu corridor). The famous lama Chokyi Odser developed the Mongolian writing system on the basis of the Uyghur alphabet and as a result Buddhist works were available in the Mongolian language. The large-scale translation activity started under Kublai and continued under his descendants.

Besides the faiths and monks mentioned above, the representatives of other religious systems such as Daoism, Chinese Buddhism and Christianity (Nestorian and Catholic) had made attempts at establishing their influence in the Mongolian society but Tibetan Buddhism finally had the upper hand in this struggle of ideas.

However, from the intellectual and religious points of view, Buddhism of the Mongolian imperial court (let alone wider popular circles) was largely superficial. It may be assumed that besides their political recommendations and advice concerning Tibet, Mongols were interested only in the Tibetan medicine and Tibetans' abilities for tantric magic. Marco Polo [Giovanni del Plano Carpini et al, 1997:243] pointed out that at the imperial court the monks of different schools competed in their magic skills. The rivalry among schools for greater influence (both at the court and in Tibet itself) resulted in controversy and arguments which sometimes took the form of military conflicts involving different court parties. These were in fact the reasons for the wars between the Oirats and Mongols especially in the period after the Yuan epoch.

In Chapter II we have mentioned the war of 1285-1290 between the Drikung and Sakya. D. Snellgrove and H.

Richardson pointed out that “it was a period of bitter, bloody deeds and unscrupulous intrigue, in which men of religion played the leading parts and monks fought in the battles, for fighting seemed already to have become the responsibilities of one class of monastic inmates” [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:149]. As a result of the fierce fighting the Drikung monasteries were subjected to fire and many of the monks were killed. The Oirats who supported the school had to retreat into the farthest corners of the steppe.

Therefore, in the late thirteenth century, or even earlier, the political situation in Central Asia can be characterized as quite peculiar. The alliance of the Drikung with the Oirats was to be, first and foremost, anti-Mongol (it should be noted again here that the Sakya had never had any influence in northern Tibet where the Kagyu sub-schools had the upper hand). The Oirats and the elite of the Drikung School were interested in undermining the strength of the Yuan dynasty, their common enemy. One cannot but agree here with L.N. Gumilyov who noted that in the thirteenth century the matters of faith and political strategy corresponded to a certain degree to each other [Gumilyov, 1970:468].

* * *

In 1368 the Yuan dynasty lost its power. The following years were not conducive to the Mongolian society; this was the beginning of an epoch of bitter internal strife, with the economy and society in a most difficult state. At the time,

according to B.Y. Vladimirtsov's vivid description, "with the performance of new heroic sagas the ancient 'tales' were gradually giving way, with the loud noise of the shaman's tambourine the Buddhist sutras were being forgotten, the old manuscripts were disappearing in the never-ending conflicts and bloody internal strife, the invaluable literary works and other monuments of the former Mongolian culture were being destroyed with no hope of their recovery"¹⁰⁵ [Vladimirtsov, 1920:97].

The Mongolian world faced the "dark period" of its history from the late fourteenth century to the second half of the sixteenth century. There is practically no evidence showing that Buddhism was still alive among the Mongolians of the period, but it is obvious that the Buddhist tradition was not completely non-existent [Bira, 1978:166].

The information of Chinese primary sources concerning the Buddhist faith of the Eastern Mongolians refers, as a rule, to the territory of Uryankha (present day Tuva) [Jagchid, 1971:53-54]. Thus it may be assumed that Buddhism is most likely to have had no major influence on the Mongols and "the Mongol khans and leaders of Eastern Mongolia... were not so zealous as the Oirat leaders... Among the Eastern Mongols the Buddhist religion gradually disappeared but the Shamanism... still survived" [Jagchid, 1971:55].

¹⁰⁵ "под напевы богатырских былин забываются старинные "сказания", под гул шаманского бубна забываются буддийские сутры, во время бесконечных наездов и кровавых междуусобных войн исчезают старые рукописи, гибнут безвозвратно памятники былой монгольской культуры, памятники литературного творчества".

The expulsion of the Mongols from China had no significant effect in any way on Tibet and the Oirats. Besides, the new Ming dynasty adopted on the whole the same system of interactions which had been formed between the Tibetan religious hierarchy and Yuan emperors [Shen, Liu, 1973:42; Sperling, 1983].

The Oirats, on their part, had preserved their contacts with the Snow land (Tibet). Unfortunately, as the primary sources are scarce and those available have not been studied thoroughly, it is impossible for the time being to cite particular dates or figures involved in maintaining those contacts between the two sides in the second half of the fourteenth century. Anyway, our hypothesis on their interactions has been supported by the evidence of the events that followed.

After the united Mongol Empire started to decline in the 1350-60s, Maverannahr fell under the control of Timur (Tamerlane, 1336-1405), the founder of one of the most powerful empires of Central Asia. He started his conquests in the early seventies to finally bring Maverannahr, Khoresm, the Caspian lands, Afghanistan, Persia, Mesopotamia, Northern India and the South Caucasus under his control. China was also under threat as the negotiations failed and Timur the Lame started preparations for his Beijing expedition. But the plan was not to be realized due to his sudden death at the beginning of 1405. The empire separated into two parts: one of them was Horassan with Herat as its center and the other was Maverannahr with Samarkand as its

center. The latter was under the rule of Ulugbek (Timur's grandson) until 1449.

There was great joy in China at the news of Timur's death.

The pro-Buddhist policy of the Chinese Ming dynasty was justified not only by their desire to find some common ground with the nomads (Oirats, Mongolians), posing a threat to their northern and western borders but also by the attempts of the Ming to ensure their support as possible allies against Tamerlane's power. Under the new circumstances (Tamerlane's death) the Chinese court decided to expand in the western direction and their armies occupied the land of ancient Tangut (Xi-Xia). The Western Mongolian group of the Torgouts who used to live there had to move further towards the Oirats in the north east after fierce resistance.

Since the early fifteenth century the Oirats were powerful and entrenched in Central Asia. This can be seen in the fact that in 1408 three Oirat khans were granted the highest Chinese titles: Makhamu received the title of shun-nin-van, Taipin – syan-i-van and Batubolo – an-le-van (cit. op. [Chernishev, 1990:18]). According to A. Chernishev, the famous Oirat Khans Batulu-chinsang and Ugechi-khashig are to be identified as Makhamu and Taipin; while the third of the khans who was the head of the Oirats and was known in the Chinese primary sources under the name of Batubolo has not been identified so far [ibid]. According to some scholars [Bretschneider, 1888:160; Chernishev, 1990:25, 48], throughout the fifteenth century the Oirats played a significant role in Mongolia as they twice succeeded in having their khans on the Mongolian throne while at other

times they made attempts (though not always successful) at having their puppets on that throne¹⁰⁶.

With a skillful policy of maneuvering, the Mings, however, succeeded in pushing the Oirats and Mongols to a conflict and in 1410 the Mongols were defeated by the united forces of the Oirats and Chinese. But in four years, feeling threatened by the growth of the Western Mongolians' power, the imperial troops crushed Batulu-chinsang's forces at the river of Tola while soon after this Batulu-chinsang was killed by Ugechi-khashig (Taipin).

The “shun-nin-van” title was inherited by Togon, Batulu-chinsang's son. Under the Togon's rule and especially under his son Esen's rule, their efforts at creating and strengthening a united centralized Oirat state and thus promoting a sustainable social life were conducive to the development of the Oirat culture and growth of Buddhism.

The evidence supporting the idea of the Buddhism of the Oirats can be found by way of analyzing the Ming religious policy aimed at supporting, in the first place, those Tibetan Buddhist schools which were most influential in the Mongolian speaking world. Practically all the heads of the Tibetan Buddhist schools were invited to the Ming court, with the Kagyu leading figures predominating among them (in particular, the “Black Hat” Karma whose senior monk was proclaimed the head of all the Buddhists of the empire) [Karmay, 1975:55; Sperling, 1982:105-108].

¹⁰⁶ According to the Mongol Law, only Genghis Khan's successors could have ascended to the throne of all Mongols.

Unfortunately, the primary sources on the Buddhism of the Oirats in the fifteenth century being scarce, it is impossible to reconstruct the picture of their religious life in greater detail. Nevertheless, the data available for the scholars today, allow for making conclusions that, firstly, the second stage of Buddhism (begun under Genghis Khan) was characterized by the loss of its importance, less drastic, though, than that of Eastern Mongolians; secondly, according to the materials cited above, it was Buddhism of the Kagyu School.

Since the early fifteenth century the Oirat missions almost annually visited the capital of the Celestial empire, often addressing the Emperor to grant them objects of the religious cult. Thus in the “Shikai” chapter of the “Min shi” chronicle there is a reference to the monk named Kamala Shri (Kamala Shila) who arrived at the Imperial Court at the head of the Oirat mission in 1437. He mentioned in his speech that he had visited the court as a member of several other missions before. According to Jagchid, the monk was not a Tibetan; he was an Oirat [Jagchid, 1971:49]. It is known that practically every monk had a Tibetan name and that is why the ethnic background identification of a particular Buddhist figure may pose a serious difficulty. The fact that Kamala Shri was granted the title of the “State Tutor” testifies to his high position in the Oirat society.

The following piece of information dates to the beginning of 1446: “Yeh-hsien (Esen), the Wa-la (Oirad) T’ai-shih reported that the head of his tributary mission, Kuan-ting Kuo-shih Ch’an ch’uan Lama deeply mastered the teaching of Buddhism and asked (the Emperor) to bestow on him a

(right) title, silver seal and monks gown of golden embroidery. Also (he) asked for a painted scroll of five categories of Buddhas, rings, thunder-bolt, drums, lined jewelry covers, sea shells and other ceremonial instruments" [Jagchid, 1971:51; see also: Serruys, 1975:44]. It is also pointed out in the text that the monks of the "Red Hat" sects were most likely to be still staying on the territory to the north of the desert (probably the desert of Takla-Makan was meant here).

It should be noted here that Kamala Shri and Gushi Chamchen mentioned above were quite famous and respected by the Oirats. Their works and in particular translations of aphoristic texts from Tibetan into Oiratian were still kept, according to D. Rinchen, by Tsoros Tegus Dalai, the Derbet Khan, in his residence in Ulankom in 1928, as well as in the library of the Khan of the Karashar Torgout, which he had inherited from his ancestors. The colophons of their treatises refer to Togon Khan and Esen Khan who addressed the lamas with requests to translate some works from Tibetan into Oiratian; as well as to the dates the works were begun and completed and details about signs (omens) and victories in the wars against "Black Chinese", etc. [Rinchen, 1974:97-98].

There is also a record dating to 1452 which refers to another of Esen's State Tutor – Sangdag Shri, as well as to a monk named Sakui-Temur [Jagchid, 1971:52], while D. Kara cites the two monks named Samanda Shri and Tsyashilinjen in the Esen's service [Kara, 1972:36]. S. Jagchid points out that besides the lamas of the highest positions involved in

political matters, “there might have been other lamas who did not involve themselves with politics but only practised their holy work as priests and preachers of the Law of Buddha” [Jagchid, 1971:52]; almost all of the Ming data concerning the issue of Buddhism among the Mongolian people deals exclusively with the Oirats [Jagchid, 1971:53].

It may be concluded from what has been said above that Esen Khan, the most powerful chieftain of the Oirats, worshipped Buddha and respected monks. Besides, it may be assumed that Esen recognized the sacred religious power of the Chinese emperors. At the time China was the religious center not only for the Oirats but, in general, for all the nomadic and semi-nomadic neighbors of the Celestial Empire and they regarded it as an honor to send the so called “tributary” missions to obtain Chinese titles and ranks.

Despite the fact that the Oirat missions to the Ming court with requests of religious character were rather frequent, there is no doubt they also had possibilities for direct contacts with Tibet. Characteristically, even in the late sixteenth century when Buddhism was spreading quickly among the Mongolians, Altan Khan sent an invitation to Sodnam Gyatso in Tibet, “at the same time... requested the sending of a Tibetan monk from China and the transmission of Buddhist scriptures in the Tibetan language from Peking” [Heissig, 1987:26]. Thus the evidence of the requests concerning religious matters made by the Oirat Khans only to the Chinese Court does not exclude direct Oirat-Tibetan contacts – as we can find out, the Eastern Mongols kept close religious relations with both Tibet and China, too.

Of interest in this respect is the data cited in the H. Richardson's work [Richardson, 1958]. While focusing on the history of the Karma school, he came across a reference in the primary sources to some presents made in about 1465 to Tamchad Kyenpa Chodrag Gyatso (tham cad mkhyen pa chos grags rgya mtsho, 1454-1506), the seventh head of ("Black Hat") Karma Kagyu, by a certain Mongolian Khan, the Genghis Khan's direct descendant. According to the scholar, it must have been Mandagul Khan, the twenty-seventh successor of Genghis khan, who died in 1467 [Richardson, 1958:150].

As has been mentioned above it was the time of the Oirats' dominance in the political life of the Mongolian world and some of the khans of Mongolia were in fact Oirat puppets. One of these was Mandagul Khan who ruled between 1463 and 1467 ascending to the throne mainly thanks to Tsyatsyasylan¹⁰⁷, the Oirat chief, who was his father-in-law. Tsyatsyasylan himself was granted the title of "Taishi" and thus became the second powerful statesman after the Khan [Chernishev, 1990:28]. Therefore, the decision to send presents to the head of the "Black Hat" Karma was most likely to have been taken jointly. Later, in 1470, Chodrag Yeshe (chos grags ye shes), the fourth head of the "Red Hat" Karma school, came with a visit to Mongolia but, evidently, his young age (he was 17 at the time) prevented him from achieving any visible results [Richardson, 1958:150].

¹⁰⁷ According to the Mongolian sources, his name was Begersen-Taishi. See [Gorokhova, 1986:64].

To sum up, the materials cited above evidence to the fact that the Buddhist sangha was alive and operative at the time only among the Oirats. There is also every reason to believe that it was Buddhism of the Kagyu School. By the mid-fifteenth century, however, the teachings of the Geluk School had started to spread among the Oirats to become gradually dominant both in Tibet and among the Western Mongolians. One of the major reasons for the immediate success of the Geluk among them was the fact that the Torgout and Khoshout, the Western Mongolian clans, joined the Oirats.

4.2. The Development of Geluk Teaching among Oirats as the Third Stage of the Buddhist Influence in Nomadic Environment

The Geluk, the latest of the Tibetan Buddhist schools, has appeared as the natural outcome of the previous development of the religious system and thus embraced the outstanding achievements of its predecessors, the first of these being the Kadam School. Je Rinpoche Tsongkhapa (tsong kha blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419), the founder of the Geluk, was an outstanding figure. In accordance with the Tibetan tradition, the circumstances of his birth were full of auspicious portents and since his early days Tsongkhapa displayed his extraordinary capabilities. When he was six years old he met Karma Rolpe Dorje Lama (rol pa'i rdo rje, 1340-1383), the fourth head of the Karma Kagyu school, at the lake of Kukunor. On seeing the boy's specific marks, the lama said he was like Buddha and he gave Tsongkhapa the teaching and the name of Kunga Nyingpo (kun dga nyung po) [Karma,

1980:86; Tucci, 1949, I:116-118; see details in: Je Tsongkhapa, 1994].

Tsongkhapa teachers' in philosophy, logic of Buddhism, tantric mysteries, and medicine were all the outstanding religious practitioners of Tibet. His fame as a skillful religious master spread far beyond the borders of the country and people started to come to him in great numbers to become his disciples.

The establishment of the Geluk as the leading school in Tibet was determined by the specific character of relationships among Tibetan Buddhist schools. It should be noted that under the circumstances of hard competition among different ideological currents, no new school was able to preserve its influence in the society unless it was supported by another school, more powerful and related to it in a number of important ways (such as the similarities of practices, the same texts for study, etc.).

From its beginnings, the Geluk (Gaden, as it was known at the time) was able to win the patronage of the Pagmodu Kagyu School. As it was said, "the Pagmodu and Geluk have 'two doctrines' but a 'single spirit' ",¹⁰⁸ Besides, the "Yellow Hat" School was close to the Drikung which in its turn was also closely related to the Pagmodu [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:181].

There is no evidence of any friction between the Geluk and other Buddhist schools in Tsongkhapa's life time. His

¹⁰⁸ "Phag mo gru pa'i snge srid dang rgyal ba tsong kha pa'i bstan pa gnyis srog gcig/" [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1977:95].

success might also have been determined by the fact that he refused to take part in the political life of the country and directed all his effort at strengthening the discipline among his disciples, as well as at increasing their responsibilities. And these were his considerations when Tsongkhapa did not accept the invitations of the Ming court to visit China.

Thus having ensured powerful allies on its side and increasing the number of its disciples among the population, the new school very quickly began the construction of the largest monasteries in the central part of the country. As early as 1409 the first famous Geluk monastery Gaden was founded. That very year saw the first celebration of Monlam Festival (smon lam chen mo) which was to be celebrated annually, beginning on the fifteenth day of the first month of the Tibetan New Year. The celebrations lasted three weeks and during this time the monks prayed for the happiness of all living beings. Tsongkhapa's closest disciples were the founders of other two large monasteries – Drepung (bras spungs) built in 1416 and Sera (se ra) in 1419 near Lhasa.

In 1419 Tsongkhapa "reached Nirvana". His immediate successor was Gyaltsap Darma Rinchen (rgyal tshab dharma rin chen), then there were Kaidrup-Je (mkhas grub rje) and Gedundub (dge 'dun grub, 1391-1475). It is Gedundub who should be given credit for considerable achievements of the school in propagating its teachings in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. This outstanding religious leader founded the famous Tashilunpo monastery (bkra shis lhun po) near Shigatse. He also predicted his future reincarnation; the name of the next head of the school was Gedun Gyatso (dge 'dun

rgya mtsho), who was to be recognized as the 2nd Dalai Lama (it happened after his successor Sodnam Gyatso had become the first monk to receive the title of Dalai Lama in 1578; in accordance with the tradition he is considered to be the 3rd Dalai Lama while Gedundub was declared to be the First one).

Already during the Gedundub's lifetime, the relationships between the Geluk and "Red Hat" Karma School grew very tense. After his death the situation worsened to the extent that Gedun Gyatso had to spend most of his lifetime traveling all over Tibet as he did not dare to stay in any of the Geluk monasteries mentioned above, built at the walls of Lhasa by his predecessors. The conflict of interests between the two schools was so serious that Y. Roerich believed that their struggle for the influence and power in the country became the major event in the history of Tibet in the period between the fifteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries [Roerich, 1959:188].

Sodnam Gyatso, the next head of the Geluk School, who came from a family of the Sakya and Pagmodu followers, continued the efforts of building closer relations with the Drikung and Pagmodu schools. He even managed to transform some of their monasteries into those of the Geluk [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:183].

It should be pointed out here that the new school stood out among the other schools that were involved in their internal conflicts, and were more interested in mundane matters having forgotten about modesty, religious vows and asceticism. Under the circumstances the new teaching

succeeded in recruiting an increasing number of followers who were attracted by the strict celibacy, stern monastic discipline and refusal of the “Yellow Hats” in participating in politics.

The first contact of the Geluk with the Mongolian speaking people may be dated back to Tsongkhapa’s lifetime, i.e. the late fourteenth century. The Mongolian scholars S. Bayantsagaan and D. Tserenpil examined the Tsongkhapa’s earliest letter (the one available to us today) addressed to a Mongol khan, supposedly to Bilitu or Tegus-Temur, dating back to 1378 [Bayantsagaan, Tserenpil, 1982]. The letter contains instructions concerning the observance of the “Two Laws”, that is the concept of the unity of the strong secular and strong religious powers based on the “Teacher-Pupil” relationship between a lama and a Khan.

But before reaching Mongolia proper, the Geluk lamas had to cover a long distance across the lands occupied by Western Mongolians – the Torgouts and Khoshouts.

In our opinion, the third stage of the spread of Tibetan Buddhism (the Geluk teachings) among the Oirats is directly linked with the issue of their ethnic background in the mid-fifteenth century. Therefore to identify the role of particular Oirat groups (clans) in the process it is necessary to deal, even very briefly, with their divisions and groupings at the time.

The issue of the ethnic background of the Oirats between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries is still a controversial one. There are opposite views of the origin of such ethnic groups

of Western Mongolians as the Torgout, Dzungar, Derbet and others. Thus according to H. Howorth, the Dzungar and Derbet were the former Batut who belonged alongside the Khoit to the Choros clan; the Torgout descended from the Kergut who were related with the Kereit, and the Khoshout were the descendants of the Ogelet [Howorth, 1876:590].

P. Pelliot disagreed with this opinion, pointing out that only the Dzungar and Derbet were the Choros while the Khoit belonged to the Ike-Mingyan clan [Pelliot, 1960:80, note 197]. Relying on “Cjun Geer Tsuanbu Tsuluye” (“A Brief Note of All the Dzungar Clans”) by the Qianlong Emperor of 1763, Pelliot points out that the Oirats of the eighteenth century were made up of the Choros, Derbet, Khoshout and Torgout [ibid., p. 6]. The Khoit were a minor group within the Derbet clan to rise to the level of a full-fledged member of the Four Oirat Confederation only after the departure of the Torgout to Russia in the late sixteenth century [Pelliot, 1960:81, note 204].

Of great interest for the present discussion is the data contained in the famous work of the late eighteenth century “Iletkhel Shastir” (“The Highest Approved Clan History and Biographies of the Van and Gun of the Outer Mongolia and Turkestan”) which P. Pelliot extensively used in his work cited above. It was also studied by the Kalmyk scholar V. Sanchirov [Sanchirov, 1990]. According to this source, the Dzungars and Derbets “were of the same origin, claiming their descent” from Esen Khan, mentioned above. V. Sanchirov points out: the Derbet princes are the descendants of the Khan’s elder son Boro Nakhal while the Dzungar

princes are related to his younger son Darkhan-Noyon [Sanchirov, 1990:55]. I. Zlatkin pointed out that the Derbet separated from the Choros clan somewhere in the beginning of the second half of the fifteenth century [Zlatkin, 1983:45].

The data of “Iletkhel Shastir” supports the evidence cited by P.S. Pallas [Pallas, 1776:25] and Batur-Ubushi Tyumen [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:22], according to which, the Khoshout princes descend from Khabutu Khasar, the Genghis Khan’s younger brother. P.S. Pallas noted that the Khoshout united with a certain Togon-Taishi [Pallas, 1776:25]. Thus it may be concluded that the Khoshouts united with the Dzungars in the first half of the fifteenth century. It may also be noted at this point that by the mid-fifteenth century the formation of the large ethnic and political alliances of the Oirats had almost been completed, with their beginnings going back to the earlier centuries.

Approximately at this time the Torgouts¹⁰⁹ also joined the Oirats. Like the Khoshouts, they acquired their status on the basis of the military-administrative institutions of the period of the Mongol Empire. According to the historical tradition, Ong Khan (Van Khan), the chief of the Kereit, is recognized as the forefather of the Torgouts [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:25; Howorth, 1876:558; Pallas, 1776:92]. P. Pelliot

¹⁰⁹ “When the Torgouts joined the Oirats they were headed by Mergeni-Erketu Khan” (“Когда тургоуты присоединились к ойратам, у них был хан Мергени-Еркету”) [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:26]. Since there is a reference to Kho-Urluk Khan, his seventh generation descendant, who lived between the late sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, the event in question may have taken place in the twenties of the fifteenth century. See also: [Lytkin, 1969:50].

noted that the history of the Torgout is of special interest in view of their migrations, as well as of their possible relation to the ancient Christian Kereit [Pelliot, 1960:25].

There is a good reason to believe that the ethnonym “Torgout” originated from the name of Genghis Khan’s bodyguards (Mong. “turga’ut”, Chinese “khu-vei san ban”) which somewhat changed with time [Avlyaev, Sanchirov, 1984:44-46; Pelliot, 1960:30-33]. The bodyguards had special importance in the Mongols’ military victories [Bartold, 1968, V:619]. They were mainly sons of commanders of 10000, 1000 and 100 troops (noblemen-tyumniks’, tisyachniks’ and sotniks’ sons), as well as some of the able, smart and “strong” young men chosen from “sul kun”, that is “free arats” [Sandag, 1970:35].

“With the collapse of the united Mongolian state, the remaining parts of the Mongolian speaking clans (the Kereit, Merkit and others who were Genghis Khan’s guards – B.K.) gradually established themselves as a certain ethnic group which came to be known under the name of Torgout”¹¹⁰ [Sanchirov, 1990:68]. They also had their Khanate which was situated, according to some scholars, in the land of Tumet [Howorth, 1876:558] and, according to others, in Ordos [Avlyaev, 1994:147]. In our opinion, the Torgout formed into an ethnic group in the land of the Tangut. Thus, according to S. Kozin [Kozin, 1940:74, 77] and Ts. Nominkhanov [Nominkhanov, 1958:102], this is supported

¹¹⁰ “С распадом единого монгольского государства, эти остатки монголоязычных племен, консолидировавшиеся в некую этническую общность, выступили на арену истории под названием тургутов”.

by the lexical data. Thus the second component of the word-combination “Khalmag Tangchi” (i.e. “Kalmyk Tangchi”) means in fact “a man from Tangut”¹¹¹, the name left in the people’s memory as a recollection of their former motherland.

The Kalmyk primary sources point out [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:21] that in the late fourteenth century the Oirat groups of the Torgout and Khoshout were already roaming near Tibet and on the Tangut lands (in Amdo and Kukunor) [Shakabpa, 1967:89]. It should also be noted that the population of the region (the Monguor, in particular) by that time had already been under the influence not only of the “Red Hat” schools but also of the “Yellow Hats”. In accordance with the traditional Tibetan views concerning the local influence of different Buddhist schools, they were most influential in the regions adjoining their monasteries. In fact their teachings were first declared in those monasteries; hence the school was often named after the monastery where it was started. Therefore the factor of the territorial proximity could be more crucial than the teachings themselves.

This is supported by further evidence of the Tibetan primary sources. Thus such an important one as “Dzam gling rgyas bshad” of the early nineteenth century points out that “in former times, they (the followers – B.K.) did not associate whatsoever with the Sa-(skya-pa), Rnying-(ma-pa), Kar-(ma-pa), ‘Brug-(pa), Bka-gdams-(pa), nor Dge-luds-(pa).

¹¹¹ The Mongolian researcher A. Luvsandendev points out that “Khalmag Tangchi” means “the noble Kalmyk people, the sacred Kalmyk state”; he also notes the association of the word with the Tangut [Luvsandendev, 1992:83-84].

Nowadays not only is there no distinction between the three schools of the Bka-gdams-pa, the Dge-lugs-pa and the Mtshan-nyid-pa; but even the ‘Bri-(gung-pa), the Stag-(lung-pa) and the Rnying-(ma-pa)... are on the point of becoming indistinguishable” [Wylie, 1962:75]. Moreover, there could be several monastic schools (datsans - grwa tshang) in one and the same monastery (for example, in Palkor Choide - dpal ‘khor chos sde) where the students studied the teachings of the Sakya, Geluk and Kagyu [Wylie, 1962:70].

The Geluk teachings were important in Amdo and its teaching spread via the Tibetan nomads in the north of the country to the regions even farther in the north, thus reaching the Torgouts and Khoshouts who were the nearest to the Snow land of all the Western Mongolian clans. Relying on Tibetan sources, S. Chandra Das pointed out that “the Prefect of the Gomang College of Dapung, named Ton-dup Gyamsho, who was famed to have attained the second stage of Bodhisattva perfection, introduced Buddhism into the Thorgwod country, the progress of which was, however, impeded by the surrender of the country to the Russians (Orrus)” [Das, 1984:154].

When the Chinese expanded to the North and occupied “Tangut oron” (Kalm.- “Land of the Tangut”) in 1405, the Torgouts joined the Oirats which had happened in 1420’s. Most likely, this led to the spread of “the Yellow faith” (the Geluk teachings) in Dzungaria.

The facts, supporting the idea of the Buddhist tradition of the Oirats in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, have been discussed above. Obviously, at first the Geluk’s influence

could not have been significant as the Oirats adhered mostly to the Kagyu teachings. But the new school's teachers made serious effort to strengthen their influence among their new disciples, while the events taking place in Tibet in the late fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries contributed to the process quite considerably.

In 1479 the Karma School, which was under the patronage of the Tsang rulers (Western Tibet), built its new monastery at the town walls of Lhasa. But it was destroyed by the Geluk monks. The Ringpung clan, the rulers of Tsang, led their army to Wu (Central Tibet) the next year and managed to occupy some of its territories but failed to take Lhasa at first. The military conflicts continued up to 1498 when Lhasa was finally subjugated. The Sera and Drepung monks were banned from attending the Monlam ceremony. Only in 1517 when the Ringpungs were driven out, the head of the Geluk school was able to return to Lhasa and since then the "Yellow Hat" monks could take part in the Monlam Festival again. The conflict lasted for a long time and practically all the secular and senior religious figures were involved in the war. Thus it was only natural that the conflicting sides asked for help outside and Mongolians were the first whom they addressed.

While dealing with the events in the Northern Tibet and Kukunor in the sixteenth century, the historians, as a rule, single out the meeting between Sodnam Gyatso and Altan Khan, the chieftain of the Eastern Mongolian clan of Tumet, as well as the spread of Geluk among the Mongols which followed it. There is, of course, no doubt that the year 1578

was a turning point in the history of Buddhism among the Mongolian speaking peoples. However, whatever Altan Khan's motives were to invite Sodnam Gyatso to Mongolia, they are not enough to explain the surprisingly quick success of the Geluk teachings among both Eastern and Western Mongolians. The explanation seems to be obvious if we shift the focus and take into consideration the fact that Western Mongolians were the first to embrace the Geluk Buddhist teachings. The idea is fully supported by the evidence of the events which took place before and after the adoption of the Geluk teachings by the Mongolian speaking peoples.

4.3. The Oirats and the Establishment of the Geluk as the Dominant School

in the Mongolian Speaking World and Tibet

The Mongolian state gained stability under Dayan Khan's rule (1470-1543), and his unification policy was continued by Altan Khan (1505-1582), the head of the Tumet. In 1552 Altan waged war on the Oirats who were driven from Karakorum (these were probably the Khoit). Ten years later, other Oirats, this time the Torgout, were crushed by the Ordos Khan Khutukhta Cetsen Khuntaiji (sic – the high title of the “Khutukhta” of the Khan prior to Sodnam Gyatso's visit to the Mongolians). Moving further to the west, by 1566 he had reached the northern part of Amdo, the region where the Oirats (mainly the Torgouts) used to live. Here Cetsen Khuntaiji developed close contacts with the lamas Borsa, Kanci, Darkhan, Usundur Shanjin and Altan Sanjir [Ahmad,

1970:87; Roerich, 1959:193]. The lamas most likely belonged to the Geluk School, which was the most influential in the region [Richardson, 1958:155].

In 1570, four years later, the war against the Oirats of Qinghai (Kukunor) was continued by Altan Khan. That time the Qinghai area was the pasture land of the nomadic subjects of the Khoshout chieftain Baibagas's uncle, of the Torgout of the Sain Serdenke Khan's relatives (his cousin's grandfather, his father Mankhai and uncle Boran-Agalkhu), as well as of Jikegen-akha's Khoit.

In 1573 Altan managed to capture the territory to the north of Kukunor and he took the Lama of Arig, the reputed Buddhist figure in Qinghai [Bell, 1992:111] with him to Mongolia. Before that in 1571 the Khan had already had one of the first Geluk teachers among the Eastern Mongolians, lama Asen, who was from Do-ge ('dro dge), the region near Arig [Wylie, 1962:105]. It should be added that Arig, the region in north western Tibet, had had a Mongolian speaking population since the time of the Mongol dominance [Wylie, 1962:190].

Thus, even before 1578, Altan Khan had had contacts with the Geluk lamas while the lamas were most likely to come from the regions with the Oirat population. The Tumet Khan was fully aware how important the fact of his subjects' adoption of the religion was and also of all the political and other consequences which might follow this most significant event.

Why did he choose then the head of the Geluk School?

According to A.M. Pozdneev, in the period before Altan sent his missions to Tibet, the prevailing religious teachings of the Eastern Mongolians (in particular, the Khalkha) had been shamanism and “Red Hat” Buddhism, most likely, the Sakya School [Pozdneev, 1880:5; 1883:104]. While according to H. Richardson [Richardson, 1958:150], Mongolians had almost lost their Buddhist tradition and the first Geluk preachers (in the mid-sixteenth century) found practically no trace of Buddhist religious views among them. However, the author of the present work believes that such an extreme opinion does not seem quite impartial. Besides, it has been pointed out in scholarship on several occasions that lamas of different Buddhist schools propagated their teachings in Mongolia throughout the discussing period.

According to Y. Roerich, China was also interested in the Mongolians’ conversion to Buddhism [Roerich, 1959:193]. A somewhat different interpretation of the Chinese policy is given by W. Heissig: due to the anti-Buddhist policy of the Chinese Emperors Ying Tsung and Shih Tsung in the first half of the sixteenth century, the Chinese Buddhist missionaries moved to Mongolia to escape persecution. The scholar also points out that “the first references to the arrival of Lamaist monks among the Mongols of the Sino-Mongolian border region occur for 1547” [Heissig, 1987:26].

The Altan Khan’s first mission sent to Sodnam Gyatso arrived in 1574. The choice of the lama was most likely to have been made under the influence of promotional activity by the Arig lama. Sodnam Gyatso, however, declined the Altan’s invitation but Buddhist monks continued to propagate

their teachings going to new places and increasing their influence. In 1576 Tumen Taishi, the Khagan of all Mongolia between 1558 and 1592, was given the Buddhist teaching by lama Sangyi Dukchi of the Karma Kagyu school and granted the title of “Dzasaktu Khan” (“Benefic Khan”). The same year Cetsen Khuntaiji visited his uncle Altan Khan and said that for the sake of “the present and future lives” it was necessary to embrace and promote the Buddha’s teachings and, in particular, to invite Sodnam Gyatso. This way they would have built the ideological basis for the restoration of the Kublai’s Empire where the Khagan had his own lama.

Altan Khan accepted such arguments and his second mission arrived in Tibet in 1577 with valuable presents for the lama. This time Sodnam Gyatso accepted the invitation to pay a visit to Mongolia, which took place in 1578. To understand what the motives were behind the Geluk head’s decision to travel to the north, it is necessary to look into the situation in Tibet at the time.

Since the mid-fourteenth century the powerful Pagmodu (phag mo gru) clan had been in power in Tibet but in the mid-sixteenth century its rule was largely nominal after a number of catastrophes resulting from fights for power and first the de facto rule of the Ringpung (rin spungs) clan from 1436 to 1565 and then of the Tsangpa (gtsang pa) clan. Thus in 1569 when Sodnam Gyatso had an audience with the Pagmodu ruler of the time named Zabdung Ngawang Drakpa (shabs drung ngag dbang grags pa), the clan had practically no real power in the country [Ahmad, 1970:94]. Hence the Pagmodu, the Geluk patron, was not able to support the

“Yellow Hats” any longer and they were left defenseless to face the powerful pressure on the part of the Kagyu, especially the Karma (“Red Hat”) Kagyu. The Geluk had to solve the problem by sharply increasing the number of their followers who could defend the school, and these were to be found in the Mongolian world.

Therefore, both sides – the leaders of the Buddhist Tibetan schools and Mongolian population - were mutually interested in having close relations. Z. Ahmad [Ahmad, 1970:95] believes that Sodnam Gyatso also had his own ambitions as he allegedly wanted to use Altan Khan to achieve hegemony in Tibet in the same way as the Sakya took advantage of the Yuan dynasty’s patronage.

The Altan Khan’s meeting with Sodnam Gyatso has to a lesser or greater degree been described in the historiography [Ahmad, 1970:89-92; Huth, 1892, I:138-140; 1896, II:219-222; Tucci, 1949, I:47-49; Roerich, 1959:194], and thus our description will be brief. When the lama and his party were approaching the Altan’s place, they were welcomed by the Mongolian forces on parade and the nomads dressed in their best clothes; and finally the Khan himself wearing the white dress (this was to symbolize that the Buddhist teachings had reached the “dark” country) came out to meet the lama and presented him with precious gifts.

In the course of their conversation with the lama Cetsen Khuntaiji drew a parallel between the “teacher and alms-giver” kind of relationship which used to exist between Kublai and the Sakya, on the one hand, and the contacts of the same kind which were begun between Altan Khan and

the Lama, on the other hand. Sodnam Gyatso said that the Ongons (traditional shamanist deities) should be destroyed and the Mongolian law code should be reformed. Thus it was banned to kill women to bury with the diseased, as well as the captives and cattle; massive killings of cattle to make sacrifices at monthly and other regular ceremonies devoted to various local deities were also forbidden.

According to Sagang Sechen, Sodnam Gyatso recognized Altan Khan as the Kublai's reincarnation, and Cetsen Khuntaiji Khutukhta and his brother Cetsen Daichin as the reincarnations of the kings of the Indian states of Magadha and Koshala who lived at the time of Buddha Shakyamuni. Sodnam Gyatso himself was recognized as the reincarnation of Pagba Lama [Schmidt, 1829:230; Bell, 1992:115]. At the end of all the ceremonies Sodnam Gyatso was granted the title of the Dalai Lama (*ta la'i bla ma* — Lama — the Ocean of Teachings) while Altan Khan received the name of Chokyi Gyalpo (*chos kyi rgyal po* — the Ruler of the Faith) and another name of Lha Tsangpa Chenpo (*lha'i tshangs pa chen po* — Heavenly Mahabrahman).

In his work Z. Ahmad discussed in detail the meaning of the relationship established between the Dalai Lama and Altan Khan and pointed out its threefold character: firstly, the Dalai Lama as the Object of Worship and Alms-giving, and the Khan as the Worshiper and Giver-of-Alms; secondly, the Dalai Lama as the Object of Patronage and the Khan as the Patron (the one who builds monasteries, erects stupas and publishes texts) and thirdly, the Dalai Lama as the One to be

Protected and the Khan as the Protector (against “the enemies of the teachings”) [Ahmad, 1970:79, 98].

Therefore, it may be noted that almost two hundred years had passed before the traditional concept of the “two laws” started to spread again in the line of the Mongolian rulers since the second half of the sixteenth century. “The restoration by Altan Khan of the “two laws’ political concept had a decisive role in the success of Lamaism in Mongolia. Its proclamation as the official faith...contributed to the development of the ideological institutions which in their turn strengthened the secular power”¹¹² [Skrinnikova, 1988:15].

In Mongolia the translation activity was started and monasteries and temples were built. Most famous of them had their own schools and printing shops where they printed Buddhist texts translated from Tibetan, Indian and Chinese. The monasteries gradually turned into cultural centers. In the period under discussion Geluk Buddhism started to spread into other nomadic regions of Mongolia such as Ordos among the Dzasaktu Khan’s subjects and Abadai Khan’s Khalkha.

In the mid-sixteenth century Buddhism of the third wave, that is the Geluk teachings, spread not only among the Oirats who lived near Tibet but also among those of them whose

¹¹² “Восстановление Алтан-ханом политической концепции “двух законов” имело решающее значение для успехов ламаизма в Монголии. Объявление его официальным вероисповеданием... способствовало развитию идеологических институтов, которые, в свою очередь, укрепляли светскую власть”.

nomadic pastures were further to the north. Moreover, besides the monks (presumably they were not Oirats) captured by the Mongolian khans during their expansion to the north of Tibet, which has been mentioned above, the Chinese and Oirats themselves contributed to the introduction of their eastern neighbors to the Buddhist ideas. Thus according to A. Pozdneev, the Buddhist influence was brought into Khalkha "chiefly from the west (Dzungaria) and from the Inner Mongolian Khoshuns of the south"¹¹³ [Pozdneev, 1883:107]. He points out that the Oirats captured by Abadai Khan of Khalkha (which happened before Dalai Lama's journey to Mongols) were already the followers of the Tsongkhapa's teachings and while in captivity "had their lamas with them and took part in the prayers, etc"¹¹⁴ [Pozdneev, 1883:108].

The majority of Oirats had their settlements in the region between Tibet and Mongolia and, for instance, when Altan Khan was getting ready for his meeting with the Dalai Lama he had to fight his way to reach Kukunor¹¹⁵ but stopped there unable to move any further due to the Oirats' bitter resistance. This historic moment is described in the Chinese

¹¹³ "главным образом с запада из Чжунгарии и с юга из внутренних монгольских хошунов"

¹¹⁴ "имели здесь своих лам, совершали свои богослужения и проч."

¹¹⁵ Of certain interest in this respect is the interpretation given in the Chinese primary sources. Thus, according to these, it was Cetsen Khuntaiji who initiated the Kukunor meeting and invited Altan to join him in this foray. Khuntaiji was interested in him as an ally in the war against the population of the northern Tibet, while only the religious factor might have influenced the old Khan who had been pondering on the matters of his achievements at the end of life and imminent death. See: [Dictionary, 1968, II:1130].

primary sources as follows: “with the pretext of going to meet the living Buddha, (marching) Westward he (Altan Khan – B.K.) invaded Wa-la (Kalmuks) but he was defeated. This monk (Sodnam Gyatso – B.K.) advised him to return to the East...” [Ming shi, ch. 231, p. 4a. Cited from: Tucci, 1949, I:255].

Later, when the head of the Geluk School was already at the Mongolians’ place (in 1578) one of the Oirat Khans¹¹⁶ came to worship him. In his “History of Tibet” Dalai Lama wrote: “Sodnam Gyatso teacher had an Oirat visitor who presented him with the Sutra of Golden Light (Tib. — mdo sde gser od dam pa). When the teacher asked him about the title of the sacred text the Oirat answered that it was ‘Altan Gerel’”,¹¹⁷ (the Oirat title of the Sutra).

This passage may be evidence of the fact that by that time the Oirats had been well read in the religious literature. What is the specific character of the Sutra of Golden Light? The point is that it was one of the few sutras which, when read regularly, ensured not only “maintenance of the interaction” with the deities-patrons of the teachings but also, or rather in connection with this, helped “to protect the country”. Besides various dharani and prayer formulas, philosophical arguments, lengthy descriptions of bodhisattvas, etc. the Sutra contained instructions on how to rule the people and

¹¹⁶ According to R. Snellgrove and H. Richardson, on becoming the Dalai Lama, Sodnam Gyatso, visited Oirats [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:184].

¹¹⁷ “Rje bsod nams rgya mtsho la o rod shig gis mdo sde gser 'od dam pa la phyag nas shus pa'i tshe / gsung rab kyi ming dri ba gnang bar / al tan kha rel zer shus pa'i tshe/” [Ngag dbang blo bzan rgya mtsho, 1967:120].

state. It has been the focus of attention of scholars of the past and present.

It should be noted, however, that the fact of the Oirat nobleman's visit to the Dalai Lama is not enough to conclude that the Oirats followed only the Geluk School teachings. The patronage by Western Mongolian clans of particular Tibetan Buddhist schools will be quite obvious somewhat later, in the first half of the seventeenth century. In our opinion, this would depend on the ethnopolitical development of the united, and then separated Oirat society.

When in 1588 the Dalai Lama passed away, Altan's grandson was recognized as his reincarnation. He was brought up in Mongolia but the urgency of the situation in Tibet required his immediate presence there. In 1603 when the 4th Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso (yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589-1617) arrived in Lhasa the military activities between the Geluk and Tsang rulers started with greater hostility.

In 1610 the Tsang ruler named Karma Tansung Wangpo (karma bstan srung dbang po, ruled from ? to 1611) made an attempt to subjugate Wu (Central Tibet and the seat of the Geluk) with the help of military forces but was defeated. Eight years later his son Karma Puntsok Namgyal (karma phun tshogs rnam rgyal, ruled in 1611-1621) succeeded in seizing Wu and started the persecution of the Geluk. The situation was overcome in 1619 when according to the authors of "The People and Gods of the Snow land", a team of Mongolians who were alleged to have been there at the time of the 4th Dalai Lama "came back" to Tibet. And in

1620 the Mongolians attacked the Tsang army [Kichanov, Savitsky, 1975:83].

There is, however, an unfortunate mistake concerning the ethnicity of the forces in this description. We believe that at the time, that is the twenties of the seventeenth century, Mongolians were unable to interfere in the Tibetan events, involved in their own internal conflicts and, besides, threatened by the Manchu invasion. The army of the Chakhar Khan Ligdan (legs Idan, 1592-1634) and Khalkha Tsoktu Taiji (chok tu) arrived in Kukunor only in 1634. According to the Tibetan primary sources, in the conflict of 1619-1621 the Geluk was aided by the army of the two brothers – Guru Khuntaiji and Lhatsun Lobsan Tenzin Gyatso, who were the sons of Kholoci Noyon, the Khan of the Kukunor Torgout [The Autobiography, 1969:3]. Thus it may be concluded that their involvement in the Tibetan conflict was in fact the first example of the Oirat (Torgout) military aid delivered to the Geluk school, a fact which has been overlooked by historians before.

The Oirats were supported by the forces of the Depa of Kyishodpa (the famous political figure in Tibet in the first quarter of the seventeenth century and an active Geluk follower) while the contacts between the Oirats and Drepung monks were maintained by Sodnam Rabdan (bsod nam rab brtan) better known as Sodnam Choipel (bsod nams chos 'phel), the senior serviceman in the 4th Dalai Lama's office. He is famous as the person who identified the reincarnation of the future 5th Dalai Lama, and also headed the secret delegation sent to the Oirats by the Geluk school leadership

in a predicament to ask them for help [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:200-201]. According to Sumba Khambo, “the Tsangs were defeated by the Mongolian (Oirat – B.K.) army... and as a result everything that had been lost was recovered ...by the Geluk”¹¹⁸ [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:127].

However, the friction between the Karma and Geluk continued as the Tsang rulers strove to have the whole of Tibet under their rule and the Geluk remained the only real force opposing the realization of their ambition.

There is no doubt that the pressure exerted by the Tsang rulers was felt by almost every Tibetan Buddhist school except for the “Red Hat” Karma and it contributed to the tense atmosphere in Tibet. Druk Kagyu had to leave the country to settle down in Bhutan¹¹⁹ because of this policy; Drikung Kagyu had to move to Ladakh. The Geluk school, which alongside the Karma fought for the political power in the country, decided to ask the Oirats for help. It should be noted here that only contemporary scholars find fault with the Geluk which allegedly always relied on foreign forces while all the rest of the Tibetan Buddhist schools were against this. In fact the parties involved in the events taking place in the first half of the seventeenth century had never accused the Geluk of the betrayal of the ethnic interests and priorities or

¹¹⁸ “монгольские войска разгромили цзанцев ... вследствие чего все ранее потерянное снова досталось ... Гэлук”.

¹¹⁹ The establishment of the Druk ('brug pa) Kagyu theocracy in Bhutan (Druk yul) dates back to 1616 when the Gya (rgya) clan chieftain from Talung (rwa lung) and Druk Kagyu head at the same time Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (zhabs drung ngag dbang tmap rgyal, 1594-1651) arrived with his close circles in Bhutan to escape the Tsang persecution.

of their use of Mongolians to support them since all of them were to a various degree related to the neighboring nations and countries [Ahmad, 1970:108].

A short peace was reached between the conflicting sides in 1621. Two or three years later Lama Karma Tenkyong (karma bstan skyon, 1605-1642), the head of the Karma Kagyu and the Tsang ruler at the same time, appealed to the Mongolian Taiji Tsogtu, a long time ally of his, as well as to Donyo Dorje (don yod rdo rje), the ruler of Beri (bar khams kyi be ri, a region in the Kham province in the east of Tibet) asking for help against the Geluk. The Chakhar Ligdan Khan, who had lost earlier against the Manchu, his former friends, also joined the alliance.

Under the circumstances of religious and political terrorism, the Geluk leadership decided, in their turn, to ask the Oirats for help. The mission to them was headed by Sodnam Choipel. The choice of the Oirats was not accidental as at the time “of all the numerous clans of Mongolia, the Elet (i.e. Oirat – B.K.) Khans followed only Tsongkhapa’s religion”¹²⁰ [Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:46]. In Introduction to “The autobiography of the first Panchen Lama” is mentioned, that the situation resulted from the fact that “the older sects (existing in Mongolia at the time – B.K.), especially the Karmapa, seem largely to have devoted the greater part of their energies to the more cultivated tribes of territories like Chahar”. According to the same source, “these areas were richer, and they expected that the growing patronage of these

¹²⁰ “из среды находящихся в Монголии многих племен олеские ханы придерживались только одной религии Цзонхавы”.

tribes would help to make up for the religious revenues that were being lost through the progressive displacement of Lamaism in the western hills of Nepal" [The Autobiography, 1969:1-2].

The general meeting of the Oirat Khans took a decision to support the Dalai Lama and thus Gushi Khan of the Khoshout (1582-1655) with his army set off to Tibet. Since the Gushi Khan's military activities have been given enough attention in historiography [Tucci, 1949, I:60-64; Kichanov, Savitsky, 1975:83-85; Sanchirov, 1977], let us point out only its most important stages.

In 1637 the Khoshouts attacked Taiji Tsoktu's camp at Kukunor and as a result his army was crushed. The next year Gushi Khan himself traveled incognito to the country to have a better idea of the situation in Tibet. During his meetings with the Geluk hierarchy he confirmed his plans to do away with the enemies of the Tsongkhapa's teachings and soon at the head of his army arrived in the Kham province to crush the Tibetan and their allies' forces. In early 1642 Shigatse and Karma Tashi Zhinon (*bkra shis zil gnon*) monastery were taken which meant the Gushi's final victory over the Geluk rivals (as you may remember, these were mainly the "Red Hat" Karma School with the population supporting it). In Shigatse, in a solemn and festive atmosphere, Gushi Khan proclaimed the right of the 5th Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsan Gyatso to exercise his rule over the whole of Tibet.

The "Pupil and Tutor" relationship was established between them. Gushi Khan received the name of Chogyal (*chos rgyal*), that is the Ruler (Patron) of the teachings. In the

Tibetan primary sources he is also known as the reincarnation (embodiment) of Vajrapani, or the Ruler who had achieved one of the stages of Bodhisattva perfection [Das, 1984:156].

Gushi Khan placed his garrisons throughout the Tibetan territory and the vast region of Qinghai and Amdo became the Khoshout pasture land with their central camp situated near the lake of Kukunor. It was the beginning of a new Oirat Khandom of the Khoshout which lasted till 1723 when it was destroyed by the Qing dynasty.

The importance of the Dalai Lama's personage for the Oirats cannot be overestimated. Indeed, the year of 1642 was very much like a cornerstone in the life of this Western Mongolian people, whose history in the following years would be intertwined with the reincarnations of the head of Tibet. The Oirats managed to take the upper hand in the struggle for their influence in Lhasa against the rest of Mongolians and their allies - the Manchu. Manchu also traced their origin back to the last Yuan emperors and had a similar ambition of rebuilding the Empire with the ideological basis of Tibetan Buddhism.

The 5th Dalai Lama supported by the Khoshouts was in fact a bone fide leader who strove to conduct a policy of his own despite his dependence on the Khoshout military support. He supported all the Buddhist religious teachings while the senior monks of other schools, in their turn, saw their leader in him. This was in fact in accordance with the tradition, begun by the 3rd Dalai Lama who was recognized as the religious authority, and as such, as early as the late sixteenth century he sent Lama Lobsang Zangpo (blo bzang bzang po)

of the Sakya School as his representative in Mongolia to sanctify the Erdeni-Tsu monastery, rebuilt by Abadai Khan in Khalkha in 1586. The political and religious matters were intertwined into such a complex and interdependent system of interactions of Tibetan, Chinese, Mongolian, Oirat and other nations of the region both on their domestic and international scene that it is impossible to look at them and make judgments from one side only. And even a profound study of the events and interactions of the time seems insufficient. Sometimes what is required is a kind of immersion into the epoch in question where every seemingly minor detail should be taken into consideration.

Thus, as an example of such a detail may be the information about a delegation sent by the Tibetan religious hierarchy to Abakhai, the Manchu Emperor, in 1640. The decision to send such a mission was most likely to have been determined by the developments in Tibet itself and China as well. Thus in Tibet the relationship between the “Red Hat” Karma and Geluk was worsening with the Oirats and Mongolians involved in the conflict, while in 1636 in China the Manchu Khan Abakhai received the title of the Emperor and, presented with the seal of the Yuan emperors (“Genghis Khan’s seal”), proclaimed the beginning of the new Da Qing dynasty; the fall of Beijing was expected very soon. The head of the delegation, the highly posted Lama Gushri Cechen Choije of the Minyak (Tangut), had received not long before a special title of “Ilaguksan Khutukhta” from the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama¹²¹ [see, for example: Vulidji Bayar,

¹²¹ The title of Panchen Lama was granted by the Dalai Lama to Choekyi

2001:327-328]. The most surprising fact, though, is that he was to deliver letters to the Emperor sent not only by the Geluk leadership but also by the Tsang ruler, the head of the “Red Hat” Karma School! In their letters, after the well being wishes addressed to the Emperor and his people, the Geluk and Karma Kagyu leaders asked respectively for patronage for each of their schools [Rockhill, 1998:7-8]. Notably, the delegation was accompanied for their safety by an armed Oirat escort. In the late 1643 they arrived in Mukden where the Manchu Emperor’s court was located. That was a year after important political changes had taken place in Tibet. Paying due respect to the Oirats, the Emperor gave them the permission to present at the traditional ceremony where welcoming speeches and gifts were exchanged; thus the Manchu recognized the Oirat power in Tibet, as well as that of Dalai Lama’s and the Geluk School’s – this was reflected in the Emperor’s return letters to the heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and to Gushi Khan [Rockhill, 1998:8-11].

The Geluk leadership appreciated Gushi Khan’s efforts so much that they decided to include his army’s parade as part of the Monlam Festival celebrations. This ceremony was to be known as yasor (ya sor) and took place between the 22nd and 27th days of the first Tibetan month up to 1959 [Karsten, 1983]. The so called “yasor generals” (ya sor spyi khyab and

Gyaltsen (blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1567-1662), the head of the Tashilunpo monastery, in the late thirties of the seventeenth century; Panchen was proclaimed the reincarnation of Amitabha Buddha while Buddha Avalokiteshvara, whose reincarnation was the Dalai Lama himself, was recognized as his spiritual son.

ya sor khri pa, i. e. “yasor head”¹²²), who looked after the preparations of the army for the parade and the parade itself, were first of the Khoshout nobility, later of the Tibetan senior officials. To take part in the ceremony, “yasor generals” put on special clothes which differed from the official attire of the Tibetan aristocracy: thus they put on a wide fur robe and a large fur cap¹²³.

The growth of the Geluk influence was also connected with the fact that the preachers of the religion started to come from the Mongolian speaking nations as well. Notably the first among these were Oirats and namely Neiji Toin (1557-1653) and Zaya Pandit (1599-1662). Their role in the Buddhist history of Mongolia was so significant that the establishment of the “Yellow Hat” teachings both among Oirats and Mongolians was associated only with their names [Heissig, 1987:36-38]. Thus G. Tsibikoff pointed out that “there were also activists fighting against shamanism among the Mongolian lamas such as Neiji Toin in Southern Mongolia and Zaya Pandit in Western Mongolia, the names of those of minor importance are of course too many to mention” [Tsibikoff, 1991, II:168].

Neiji Toin, also known as Ochir-Dara, Maidari-Khutukhta and Tsagan Nomin-khan, was the son of a Torgout Khan. According to his biography, written in the classic canon of Buddhist hagiography, Abida (that was his secular name) at

¹²² The word itself probably originated from *yasour* in Oirat (Classic Mong. *jasagul* — leader, Rus. — yesaoul, i.e. captain).

¹²³ See the photo: [Le Tibet, 1979, list 3, captioned "Hauts fonctionnaires tibétains"]; [Tibet, 1983:66, captioned "Two Yarsor generals in ceremonial robes"].

first had an ordinary life of a nobleman: he married and had a son¹ but then everything changed. It happened after he had killed a pregnant deer while hunting. The young Khan felt deep compassion for the animal in pain and made a vow that he would become a monk. Despite his father's strict ban and guards put to look after him he managed to escape and keep his vow.

Neiji Toin was educated at Tashilunpo, where Panchen Lama's residence was located. His extraordinary capabilities were noticed by the Geluk senior monks and he was sent to Mongolia to propagate the teachings. The Mongolian primary sources especially point out his activities in the eastern part of the country in the period between 1629 and 1653 when the Geluk teachings took firm root in the region thanks to his own and his disciples' efforts [Heissig, 1987:32].

The wide spread of Buddhism among Oirats is also associated with the activities of Zaya Pandit (originally Khoit), the adopted son of the Baibagas Khan of Khoshouts. Thanks to his talents the seven-year-old boy was sent to Tibet for education where he received the title of Pandit for his outstanding achievements. This famous person's biography was also marked by a significant event of Zaya Pandit's participation in the Congress of all the Mongolian princes which was held in Tarbagatai on the territory of the Dzungar Khanom in September 1640. This Congress was one of the most important events in the Oirat history. It was also one of those that clearly demonstrated that in taking decisions on crucial matters concerning the sustainability of their states, the Oirat nobility always strove to work out a general policy

agreeing on their plans and objectives and finding compromises. This approach aimed at taking into consideration the opinions of other parties and accommodating their own positions was the one the Oirats realized steadily in their domestic and foreign policy. Such approach managed to find solutions acceptable for all the parties concerned and thus finally contributed to the growth of their states.

The Mongolian side at the Congress was represented only by the Khalkha Khans Subudi and Gombo. Far greater was the number of the Oirat nobility: the Khoshout Gushi Khan arrived from Kukunor with several sons and relatives and the Torgout Kho-Urlyuk Khan from the Volga region with his sons. There was also a large group of khans representing the Dzungar Khanate itself. The representatives of the Dalai Lama were also present [Litkin, 1969:52]. The Southern Mongolia representatives were absent because at the time they were already the Manchu subjects.

The Mongolian and Oirat primary sources available to us contain very little evidence of the Dzungar Congress. Maybe the Tibetan sources are more informative on the subject but so far they have been unavailable. The Congress which had taken a lot of effort by way of organizing it (in terms of time spent, finances and discussion of the agenda, etc) finally resulted in the confirmation of a number of rules known in the literature as Oirat-Mongolian Laws of 1640 ("Tsaajin bichig"). The Congress participants took a solemn vow that they would observe the rules. The only copy of the text of the Mongolian-Oirat Laws was preserved in the Kalmyk Khanate

on the Volga, later it was translated into Russian and published [Golstunsky, 1880].

It may be noted, without any exaggeration, that the Laws are a first-rate primary source giving an insight into both the inside life of the Mongolian society and its international status. They had three basic objectives: to regulate potentially conflicting situations on the domestic scene so that to avoid any possibility of internal strife; to agree on conditions for uniting forces and providing aid to each other against any possible threat from outside; to strengthen the existing order and traditions. Thus the first chapters of Tsajjin bichig were aimed at ensuring peace and order inside Mongolian world. A number of laws provided for the regulation of the old disputes and controversies which had always been a potential source of military conflicts.

The document also includes chapters devoted to the Buddhist community. They again confirmed the role of Buddhism as the state religion of all the Mongolian people, their khanates and territories; a war was proclaimed against shamans and conversion to lamas was approved of. The long standing de facto unity of the State and Sangha had its judicious form in the Mongolian-Oirat laws. Thus the legal basis for the Khan's power was built by formulating the interaction of the secular and religious powers as the condition *sine qua non* for the administration of a nomadic state. It should also be added that that law has been traditionally recognized by the Mongolian speaking people as an important instrument for regulating the conduct of both khans and their subjects (including lamas).

Zaya Pandit was very active in implementing the decisions of the Dzungar Congress. His biographer describes in detail his energetic efforts including his constant trips to the camps and pastures of the Dzungar Khans and then to other Oirats by the Volga and then to Kukunor. Thanks to these activities the positions of the “Yellow Hat” school were strengthened significantly and the lamas started to have a growing influence on the domestic and international policy of the Oirat Khans. The Dzungar Khanate grew into a center for the unification of all the Mongolian speaking people.

Besides, Zaya Pandit became famous as the author of the Oirat writing system “todo bichig” (“clear writing”) and a translator of over 183 volumes of Buddhist literature into the Oirat language, though at present we know only 50 of his translated works and namely “A Book of Eight Thousand Poems” (Naman mingan sulgud), “Diamond Sutra” (Dorje jodva), “Milarepa’s Life History” (Milan tuuji), “A Treasure of Wise Speeches” (Subasidi), etc. (See in detail: [Norbo, 1999]).

Therefore the two famous Geluk School figures mentioned above contributed in a very energetic manner to the promotion and growth of their school on the Oirat and Mongolian pasturelands. Their names were to become part of the future Buddhist history of the Oirats which followed its own way in the three states of the Western Mongolians. Since that time and, namely the mid-seventeenth century, the Buddhism of the Oirats had grown into a new phase. Tibetan Buddhism, always in the center of the Oirat-Mongolian-Manchu conflicts, would play its role in the rise to power and

fall of the Oirat states in Central Asia, as well as in the exodus of the Torgout from Russia to the deserted valleys and lowlands of the Ili and Tarbagatai.

CHAPTER V. SPECIFIC FEATURES OF OIRAT BUDDHISM IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The ethnic and political history of the Oirats differs from that of the Mongolians. This has resulted in a number of specific features developing within their Buddhist tradition, as has been pointed out in scholarship on several occasions.

Thus I. Zlatkin wrote that the process of the Lamaism which was spread among the Oirats had a number of important differences which told on the future history of the Lamaist church in the Oirat Khanates and Princedoms [Zlatkin, 1983:102]. Then the scholar made a number of important observations: thus, according to Zlatkin, the Oirats did not know the khubilgan (reincarnation) institution and the number of monasteries and monks was far less numerous than those of Eastern Mongolians. To explain these he points to the military-political and geographic circumstances of the Oirats in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as their territorial distance meant less close interactions with Tibet while a stronger position of the autocratic Oirat Khan promoted a gradual concentration of all the secular power in his hands [Zlatkin, 1983:102-103].

On the contrary, Skrinnikova believed that the Oirat-Tibetan contacts had always been very close. Thus she wrote that in

the west the Oirat ties with Tibetan monks seemed to have always been close and the monks were, as a rule, the Oirat ambassadors at the Ming court as early as the fifteenth century [Skrinnikova, 1988:25].

It should be pointed out, however, that so far the scholars have only focused on the period of the Geluk School's predominance that started to propagate its teachings, according to a widespread opinion, in the late sixteenth century. In order to reconstruct the history of the Tibetan Buddhism of Western Mongolian's, with its peculiarities, it is necessary to look into the patterns in the spread of Buddhism and deviations from these characteristics, both of the Oirats and Mongolians. The problem here is that we are dealing with one of the least investigated issues of the Oirats' early religious history.

5.1. Religion in the Oirat Political Ideology

As has been shown above, there were three main stages in the history of the spread of Buddhism among the Oirats. In the first stage some particular features of Uyghur Buddhism were reflected to a certain degree in the religious culture of both the Oirats and Mongolians (for example, the titles of the "Toin" and "Bagsha", as well as their writing system), but with the beginning of the Tibetan period the situation started to change. Despite the similar nature of Tibetan Buddhist schools in terms of their theoretical provisions and practice of their teachings, we believe that they played different political roles and had a different effect on the cultures and even

political infrastructures of these people. Therefore, it may be pointed out that for all the importance of similar beginnings of the Oirats and Mongolians on the initial stage of Buddhism (to a certain degree, of course) they developed their own unique forms of Tibetan Buddhism specific to their regions and environments. A specific character of Buddhism developed under the influence of the local features of the ethnopolitical and cultural evolution of Mongolian people, and the Oirats in this particular case. Of importance was also the fact that before the Geluk School became widespread, the Kagyu Schools were predominant among the Oirats. Thus, taking into consideration these pre-conditions in the study of the State and Sangha interactions, it will be possible to give a detailed picture of the particular, most characteristic features of the social-political role of Buddhism of the Oirats.

Buddhism was most influential among the Oirats at the time when their strong nomadic states were being formed. Of interest in respect to this, is the observation made by S. Kozin in agreement with I. Bichurin, N. Veselovsky and A. Pozneyev who ascribed to the Oirat leaders the ideas of the Yuan Emperors' political heirs, as well as political plans and intentions to reconstruct the Yuan Empire in the seventeenth or even much earlier under Esen, in the fifteenth century [Kozin, 1940:79]. The fact that Esen Khan had an ambition to restore the Yuan Empire was demonstrated not only by his self-proclamation as the Khagan of the same dynasty¹²⁴ in the

¹²⁴ Esen started to be called Da Yuan Tyan Shen Togo Khan, or The Sacred, Chosen by Heaven Great Khagan of Great Yuan. The Ming court, interpreting this as the Esen's dangerous ambition to restore the Genghis Khan and Kublai's Empire and taking into consideration the growing

mid-fifteenth century, according to Ming shi [see: Chernishev, 1990:25], but also by his appropriate religious policy. Like his father Togon, Esen Khan appreciated Buddhist monks as highly-educated people and that is why their responsibilities were not limited by the performance of religious ceremonies. They were often sent to the Ming emperors' court as ambassadors and served as advisors to the Oirat khans.

The relationship between the Oirats and Ming dynasty in the religious sphere has already been discussed in this work. The Chinese emperors were well aware of the importance of the lamas' influence on Oirat Khans whose pan-Mongolian ambitions included the restoration of the "Pupil – Teacher" alliance which existed at the Yuan court. That is why, to limit their ambitions, the Chinese made efforts to exert their influence on the Oirat khans through monks – a strategy used quite successfully by the Ming court in their relations with other "barbarians": Tibetans and Mongolians.

A vivid example of this is the data of the so called "Sinin Annals" cited in L. Schram's work: thus the Ming emperors presented the lamas of the Tibetan and Monguor tribes with various titles for their help in subjugating their own people by China – a process "started with the very beginning of the Ming (1368) and continued during the entire Ming period" [Schram, 1957, part 2:18]. The expenses on the lamas' support and on the spread and promotion of the religion were of course far less, compared with those spent on the punitive expeditions in the northern territories, especially as these

power of the Oirats, finally started to call him the Oirat Khagan.

were not safe when the imperial armies were to confront the mobile and powerful Oirat united forces. The hostility between China and the Western Mongolians was so deep and long-lasting especially in the period of the Qing dynasty that, for instance, M. Courant found it appropriate to give his famous work the following title: "L'Asie Centrale aux XVII-e et XVIII-e siecles: Empire Kalmouk ou Empire Manchou?" [Courant, 1912].

One of the means of dealing with Oirats that the Ming had used to achieve some degree of their dependence on the Empire was the procurement of necessary religious instruments and objects for them. However, even in this case, the Chinese failed to gain a decisive degree of influence on the religious life of the Oirats, and consequently on their political decisions.

The religious instrument in the Chinese policy of dealing with Western Mongolians was actively used at the time when the Oirats were growing in importance, i.e. under Togon and his son Esen's rule. Thus Schram, relying on the Pelliot's work, points out that, according to the Chinese sources, "during the Hung-wu period (1368-1398) the titles of "teacher of the empire" and "great teacher of the empire" were only granted to four or five lamas. During the Yung-lo period (1403—1424) the title of "king of the law" had been granted to two lamas, and that of "Buddha of the western Paradise" to two other lamas; but to 18 lamas had been granted the titles of *Kuan-ting* or *Ta-kuo-shih*, or both. During the Ching-t'ai period (1450-1456) the titles were

granted so profusely that we lose count" [Schram, 1957, part 2:17].

Here I would like the reader to pay attention to the fact that the distribution of all kinds of titles and ranks saw an unprecedented growth immediately after the year of 1449 when the Oirats under the Esen's leadership crushed the imperial forces in the battle at the Tu-mu river despite the enemy's numerical superiority. Over a quarter of a million-strong Chinese army was destroyed and Zhengtong Emperor himself was captured [Dictionary, 1968, I:416; Mote, 1974]. The road to Beijing was open but while Esen hesitated the Ming court managed to get over the shock very soon and the Emperor's brother ascended the throne. The Oirats had to give Zhengtong Emperor away with no gain for themselves.

The idea of building a state in which an important role was to be assigned to an alliance between the lama and the khan-emperor did not lose its attraction for Oirat khans. Its realization could have legitimized the Oirat ambitions to rule over the whole of Mongolia or, moreover, to gain an equal footing with the Chinese Emperor. In fact this was largely realized by the Oirat (Khoshout) Gushi Khan. It was chiefly through his effort that the influence and importance of the Geluk School sharply increased throughout the Mongolian-speaking world and in Tibet itself. In Sh. Bira's opinion, in the seventeenth century the leading role belonged to the Khoshout khans in the Mongolian-Tibetan interactions [Bira, 1964:40]. Unfortunately, the life and work of one of the most prominent Oirat khans has been largely under-investigated. It seems he is more famous in the historiography devoted to

Tibet than in Oiratian scholarship. Mongolian lama Damdin, who has been mentioned above, believed that in fact Gushi Khan was second most prominent figure after Genghis Khan himself in the Mongolian speaking world who played such an important role in the spread and promotion of the Buddhist religion among the Mongolian peoples [Bira, 1964:55-56].

Despite the dominant position of the “Yellow Hats,” other Tibetan Buddhist directions continued to preach their teachings both in Tibet and in Dzungaria. The data that gives evidence to support the existence of various schools of Tibetan Buddhism among Oirats dates back to the mid-sixteenth century.

In “The Biography of the Third Dalai Lama” there is a description of the young lama’s (the future 3rd Dalai Lama’s) journey to an area in the north of Lhasa in 1558 [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1977:82-84] where Sodnam Gyatso had a meeting with a group of Mongolians (about a thousand people). Notably the latter are described in the text as “hor”, “sog” and “stod hor pa”, i.e. mainly Western Mongolians (Oirats). The speech of one of the Oirats addressed to the lama is worth mentioning here. Thus he says, “I have believed in the Karma and especially Drikung teachings before but now I see that only you are the real Refuge and that is why I ask you to grant me my patron deity and build a temple”¹²⁵. Thus, it may be concluded that the Oirats of this

¹²⁵ “...Dpon gyis nga karma pa dang lhag tu 'bri gung chos rje la dad pa yod de / da res tsam ma byung bhag gi skyab gnas mthar thug khyed yin pas nga nang la sger du lhag pa'i lha zhig gnang ba dang / dgon pa 'debs dgos pa'i zhu ba phul ba ltar” [Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1977:84].

region knew the two Kagyu sub-schools. As the local people came to adopt the Geluk School teachings, this may mean that it was the beginning of the process of the “Yellow Hat” school’s growth (also see: [Sperling, 1992]).

The existence of different schools in which Oirats believed has also been supported by the facts from the life of another personage named Kholochi Noyon, still obscure in historical scholarship but mentioned in a number of Tibetan primary sources [Pokotilov, 1893:210; Richardson, 1958:55; Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:45]. However, he is very often mistakenly referred to in historical works as the head of the Mongol-Tumet in the Kukunor region [Tucci, 1949, I:51; History of Kukunor, 1972:55; Pagsam-jonsan, 1991:179, ref. 544] while in fact he was the Kukunor Torgout Khan, according to the Kalmyk primary sources.

Thus, according to Gaban-Sharab in his “History of the Oirats”, “the fifth Boigo Orlyuk’s son Ulu Tsenzei had three sons and his eldest was Khuluchi...”¹²⁶ [Gaban-Sharab, 1969:142]. Ulu Tsenzei was an uncle of Kho-Urlyuk, the Torgout Khan who migrated with his Ulus to Russia in the late sixteenth century. The other half of the Torgouts stayed in Central Asia to roam in the area of Tarbagatai and Kukuhor and among these there was Kholochi Noyon with his people. Since he was Kho-Urlyuk’s uncle’s son, Kholochi and Kho-Urlyuk were cousins.

According to the chronicles, Kholochi Noyon supported both the “Black Hat” Karma and the “Yellow Hat” Geluk.

¹²⁶ “У пятого Бойго Орлюкова сына Улу Цензея три сына: старший Хулучи...”

According to H. Richardson, who made a thorough examination of the Karma chronicles, “the tenth Zva-nag-pa, rGyal-mchog-chos-dby-ins-rdo-rje, who was born in 1604, received an invitation in 1610 to visit “King Kho lo ji” [Richardson, 1958:155]. By this time Kholochi’s people had also worshipped the Geluk as in 1603, according to the Tibetan treatise of “The Ocean-Book” (Debter-Djamtsö), Kholochi Noyon was getting ready for a meeting with the 4th Dalai Lama Yonten Gyatso [Dugarov, 1983:56]. Thus, it may be concluded that the Tibetan schools coexisted peacefully among the Oirats and there was not the hostility between them that was characteristic of Tibet where lamas happened to wage war against each other and destroy their rival’s temples. The same peaceful coexistence of different Tibetan schools was typical of Mongolia as well but the reasons for this were different, in our opinion.

Up to the seventies of the sixteenth century there had been no active effort on the part of the “Red Hat” schools to proselytize among Mongolians as compared with the Geluk preachers who were quite active in propagating their teaching. Nevertheless, the Dalai Lama had no intention of driving out the other Buddhist schools of Mongolia where they had had a long-standing tradition. While it had no powerful support in Tibet, the Geluk School did not want any new problems among Mongolians.

On its part, being aware of the importance of the Tibetan Buddhist influence, the Chinese court strove to take advantage of this factor. Therefore it did not allow any controversy between different Buddhist schools at the court

and among Mongolian people. This is supported by facts from the history of Mongolian Buddhism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Thus, Altan Khan was given teachings by the Geluk head while Ligdan Khan was given the teachings by the Karma Kagyu lamas in 1604 and by a Sakya lama in 1617 (the lama's name was Sharba Pandit).

The causes for the peaceful coexistence of the "Red Hats" and "Yellow Hats" among Oirats were of a different character. One of the main reasons was that the "Red Hat" schools were those of the Kagyu sub-schools that were the Geluk allies. It should be noted here, for example, that in 1618 when the Tsang head Karma Puntsog Namgyal led his army to attack Lhasa and seized it, the Sera and Drepung monks found shelter in the monasteries of the Taglun Kagyu situated in Amdo [Snellgrove, Richardson, 1968:193]. In fact, only the "Red Hat" Karma was the "Yellow Hats'" bitter enemy. The reasons for their hostile relations were rooted, as has already been mentioned above, in the seventies of the sixteenth century when Karma Tansung Wangpo, the young Depa (head, ruler) of Tsang at the time, having subjugated the vast territories of the Western and Northern Tibet, started to exert his pressure on Central Tibet, the seat of the Geluk. The situation reached its critical stage so that the Geluk leadership had to immediately fetch the "reincarnation" of the 3rd Dalai Lama from Mongolia in 1603, who was enthroned as the 4th Dalai Lama. The group of Mongolian (Tumet) cavalry accompanying him was driven out of Lhasa in 1605.

In 1617 the 4th Dalai Lama passed away and the next year Lhasa was occupied by Karma Puntsog Namgyal, who became the Tsang Depa in 1611 after Karma Tansung Wangpo's (his father) death. The role of the Kholochi Noyon's sons who finally defeated the Tsang forces has already been discussed above.

The second time the Oirats came to the rescue of the Geluk was also in the early seventeenth century when, according to the chronicles, the Khalkha chieftain named Mukhur Muchjik decided to do away with the Geluk teachings and Oirats as their patrons. However, as the Oirat sources point out, thanks to the wise policy of Sain-Khya Khan of the Khoit, Mukhur Muchjik Khan was taken prisoner while the Khoit Khan was granted a tamga from the Dalai Lama. According to the same source, "this steel tamga had four angles with an Indian¹²⁷ inscription in the middle of it which read as follows: "Ike Mingan Akhaksan Noyon's Tamga"¹²⁸, or the Seal of the First Noyon of the Khoit Ike-Mingyan [Batur-Ubushi Tyumen, 1969:42-43]. Therefore, it is obvious that the Western Mongolians' patronage and special ties with the Geluk School, singled out among other Tibetan Buddhist directions, including the Dalai Lama's personage, took place even before the Gushi Khan's expeditions into Tibet. The latter can be viewed as the third case of the military support lent to Tsongkhapa's followers by Oirat groups of the Torgout, Khoit and Khoshout. It seems to be important to

¹²⁷ Probably one of the Indian languages and most likely Sanskrit

¹²⁸ "Эта стальная тамга была четырехугольная, в середине ее была надпись на индийском языке: 'Йеке Мингани Ахаксан Нойони Тамга'"

mention here, that actually nothing deals in the same case with those Oirat tribes like Dzungars and Derbets.

There is an opinion in historiography that Gushi Khan of the Khoshout was chosen by Oirat khans to lead the military activities because the Khoshout of that period (i.e. the thirties of the seventeenth century) were the most powerful group of Oirats [Howorth, 1876:498; Ahmad, 1970:75]. However, there is also another opinion, according to which, Gushi Khan moved to Kukunor (the Northern Tibet) from Dzungaria to escape the Batur Khuntaiji's aggressive policy [Shara Tuuji, 1957:192]. In our opinion, these views tend to overlook the most important aspect of the issue – that of religion. Most likely, it was the “Yellow Hat” School's influence that it had had on the clan since the first half of the fifteenth century that proved decisive in the Khoshouts' departure to Tibet. The Torgouts that took part in the war in Tibet on the Gushi Khan's side were the Kholochi Noyon's subjects, i.e. the Kukunor Torgouts. The major part of this Oirat ethnic group who left for Russia had formed its own Kalmyk (Torgout) Khanate on the Volga river by 1640. Thus, according to the chronicle, “the Khoshouts... and Torgouts were roaming in Qinghai or had left for Russia and only the Derbets with the Dzungars were still traveling in the Altai area”¹²⁹ [Men-gu-yu-mu-tsi, 1895:137].

The Dzungar and their relatives, the Derbet, the two powerful Oirat ethnic groups of great mobility who founded one of the

¹²⁹ “Хошоты... и Торгуты или кочевали в Цинхае, или же переселились в Россию, и только Дурботы с Чжунгарами продолжали кочевать у Алтая”

strongest states in the Central Asian history – the Dzungar Khanate, notably avoided taking part in this war. Here it may be assumed that the Oirats of Dzungaria had predominantly the Kagyu tradition. Then, the fact that they did not participate in the war against the “Red Hat” Karma¹³⁰ on the Geluk side is justified, as well as their contacts with the “Black Hat” Karma leadership that they established later in 1717 after they had taken Lhasa¹³¹. Looking ahead, it may also be noted that after they were defeated by the Chinese in the war of 1717-1720, the Dzungar Khanate further promoted their contacts with Ladakh and often addressed the Ladakh ruler to send monks to the temples of the Ili valley [Petech, 1972:233]. It is known that the Kagyu sub-schools and especially the Drikung among them were dominant in Ladakh.

The Dzungar foray into Tibet at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the fourth case of the Oirats’ military involvement in the Tibetan internal strife. The Dzungar Khan Tsevan Rabdan (tshe dbang rab brtan, ruled 1697-1727) was worried while observing the growing Chinese influence in Tibet and the collaboration of the Gushi Khan’s descendants with the Manchu. In his international political strategy Tibet

¹³⁰ Of interest here is R. Dugarov’s observation that “there were representatives of other clans and tribes of Dzungaria among the Khoshout and Torgout who arrived in Kukunor … but no one of the Derbet, Khoit and Choros (i.e. the Dzungar proper – B.K.)” (“среди прибывших в Кукунор хошоутов и торгоутов были выходцы из других родов и племен Джунгарии … но не встречаются дербеты, хойты, чоросы”) [Dugarov, 1983:143].

¹³¹ H. Richardson mentions the meeting of one of the Dzungar military leaders Tsering Dondub with Karmapa Changchub Dorje XII (byang chub rdo rje, 1703-1732). See: [Richardson, 1958:160].

had an important role as Tsevan Rabdan was well aware of the fact that the one having an influence in Tibet had real instruments to deal with the Mongolian world. Besides, he was against the Beijing attempts to manipulate the Dalai Lama or even have their own puppet in the Potala.

The preparations for the military actions in Tibet were made in secrecy so that till the last moment neither the Tibetans and the Khoshouts nor the Chinese were aware of the Tsevan Rabdan's real intentions. Everything looked like he was sending his daughter to marry Khan Lhavzan's son with a significant armed escort when in the early August of 1717 the Dzungar 6000-strong army led by Tsering Dondub (tsé ring thon dhub) entered Tibet. In the end of November Lhasa was attacked from all sides and seized by force; the plundering in the city lasted for three days. Not only the enemies of the Dzungar and Geluk School suffered from the plundering and violence of the attackers but the "Yellow Hats" themselves, their allies. The 5th Dalai Lama's grave was damaged under the Dzungar horses; there was much destruction in Potala, practically all the Lhasa monasteries were damaged.

The Dzungars proclaimed their rule over the whole of Tibet while in fact they were strong only in the central part of the country. Their occupation of Tibet lasted till the end of 1720 when the Dzungars left Lhasa and the next year in February they were again back to the Ili. The Tibetan capital was occupied by the Chinese army and the Chinese started to build a new administration system in Tibet with the new Dalai Lama whose name was Lobsan Kalsan Gyatso (blo bzang bskal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708-1757) at the head. The

regent institution (desrid - sde srid) was substituted by a council of four ministers (kashag - bka' gshags) with Sodnam Gyalpo (bsod nams rgyal po) at the head who operated under the supervision of the leader of the imperial garrison in Lhasa. The Dzungar lamas of different Tibetan monasteries were accused of the aggressors' support and sent to prison.

This was not the first direct involvement of China in the Tibetan affairs as, for example, as early as 1709 the Emperor, worried by the Khoshout Khans' opposition to their chief Lhavzan Khan and his policy in Tibet, sent his first Manchu representative (shilang) to Lhasa.

As far as Mongolians, or rather Eastern Mongolians are concerned, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century they were suffering from bitter internal strife. Ligdan Khan of the Chakhar who pretended to be the leader of Mongolia and made an alliance with the Manchu for the same reason, failed to unite the warring groups. Since the early seventeenth century an increasingly important role had been played in the Khalkha Khanate by the Mongolian lamas-reincarnations rather than Tibetan ones; the former were apprehensive about the situation in Tibet. However, the Mongolian khans had made several attempts at establishing the rule of the "Red Hat" lamas of the Sakya and Karma Kagyu schools in Tibet but these were stopped by the Oirats and Geluk School lamas.

The Manchu also tried to play a role in the Tibetan affairs. The Manchu, also known as the Jurchens, had a semi-nomadic way of life. Thanks to their cooperation and mobility they managed not only to come in close contact with

Mongolians in the early seventeenth century but, moreover, take control of their vast territory and population. As early as 1606 the majority of Mongolian people recognized the power of the Manchu Nurhaci (1559-1626), granting him the title of the Kundulen Khan; they also supported the Manchu in taking Beijing in the summer of 1644.

The Manchu set significant store by religion. Some scholars [Sanchirov, 1977:20; Chimitdorzhiev, 1980:15-16] often ascribe to them the success of the Geluk School among the Mongolian speaking population of the time. In particular, V. Sanchirov [Sanchirov, 1977:20] supports B. Vladimirtsov's opinion who believed that because the Manchu and Oirats supported the "Yellow Hats", the Mongolians, holding "the anti-Manchu political views", started to support the "Red Hats"; the fact that this opinion is faulty was pointed out much earlier by B. Dandaron [A History of Kukunor, 1972:18-19].

W. Heissig pointed out close relationships of the Manchu nobility with Ligdan Khan who presented the Manchu with the statue of Mahakala, the family possession since the Yuan times, for the temple built in Mukden in 1638 [Heissig, 1987:32]. It is known that Mahakala is one of the major deities with the Sakya School. Having the throne of the Celestial Empire in mind, the Manchu were interested in having the loyal allies to support them in the rear and for this reason before their seizure of Beijing they took effort to rule the Mongolian Sangha.

The contacts of the Manchu with Tibetan lamas started in the early seventeenth century when some of the missionaries

arrived in Manchuria from the land of the Chakhar Mongolians. The influence of the lamas became so great that Nurhaci, the founder of the Manchu dynasty, had Lama (Bakshi) Erdeni as one of his major guests at his grand ceremony devoted to his proclamation as the Khan in 1616. The lama added the Buddhist word “geng-gen” (Mong. “gegen”, or “sacred person”) to the Nurhaci’s title which shows the new Khan’s favor of Tibetan Buddhism even at that time.

Later in 1621 Nurhaci was given the teachings by the Lama Olug Darkhan Nantso [Grupper, 1984:51] of the Sakya School. Abahai (? – 1643), the Nurhaci’s son, who succeeded his father as the Emperor, continued the development of the “Lama – Patron” relationship and started the construction of the temple of the Mahakala deity in Mukden in 1635 (it has been already mentioned that the statue of the deity, part of the family inheritance of the Kublai’s direct descendants was presented to Nurhaci by Ligdan). Other precious possessions of the temple were the remains of the Sakya Lama Sharba Khutukhta¹³² and Mongolian Kanjur¹³³ [Grupper, 1984:52].

It was a specific feature of the Manchu religious policy to patronage the Sakya School which lost its influence to a

¹³² This same Sharba Pandit, as has been pointed out above, was likely to have been sent by the Dalai Lama to Ligdan Khan in 1617 and by 1626 had been among the Manchu.

¹³³ This fact again serves as an additional piece of evidence to the close ties between Ligdan Khan and the Manchu court as it is well known that it was at this Chakhar Khan’s headquarters that the Kanjur translation into Mongolian had been completed in 1630’s. Only the Chakhar of all the Mongolian clans had real power in the Western Manchuria from the seventies of the sixteenth century.

considerable degree in Tibet itself after the fall of the Yuan dynasty in 1368 but continued among Mongolians. Abhai also needed an ideological basis to proclaim his dynasty as the Yuan successor with a reconstruction of the most important components of the political system to follow. That is why the Manchu monarchy looked for close ties with Tibetan Buddhism far earlier than it proclaimed its rule over China. Its self-identification as a religiously-minded monarchy was most likely to have pointed out the growing importance of the Manchu. It marked in fact the emergence of a state with the Dharma-Raja at its head, the ideal pursued by the Mongolians as well. Therefore, the Manchu were very quick to borrow the idea of the upper circles of the Tibetan and Mongolian nations of building a Buddhist monarchy as one of the most important constituents of the imperial power. It was this imitation of the past that contributed to the development and growth of the relationships between the Manchu and Mongolians and the Manchu and Sakya [Grupper, 1984:55].

There is also another aspect to these ties: the Manchu emperors, as well as the Mongolian emperors in their time, did not want their people to become Chinese and strove to preserve their customs and traditions. According to a number of scholars, the Abhai Khan's edict of 1634 to the effect that the population under his rule should be called Manchu was justified by the association between the ethnonym "Manchu" and Manjushri, the name of the Buddhist deity Bodhisattva.

Tibet had a great influence on the nomads and that is why the Manchu realized the importance of preserving the new high

status of the Dalai Lama to conduct their own policy targeted at the Central Asian nomads.

The official contacts of the Manchu court with the Geluk took place in 1637 while the support and patronage of this tradition started with a special edict of the young Fu-ling Emperor (1638-1662) issued in 1653. On comparing his own position with that of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, Fu-ling strove to the sacralization of his own personage and a policy aimed at greater power centralization in his state [Grupper, 1984:56; History of Kukunor, 1972:20-21]. To tighten its control over Tibet and Mongolia, the Qing dynasty made efforts to stop the interactions between Tibet and Western Mongolians at the same time. The double standards were justified by the fact that as far as Mongolians were concerned, the Manchu did not only support their religion but also had land possessions there, including cattle in large numbers. They also influenced the Sangha leadership and through lamas had control over the groups outside their power.

In order to make control of their dangerous neighbors more effective, the Manchu built an institution of senior “reincarnations” among Mongolians and appointed Chanakya Khutukhta (Chang lcang skyang ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, 1642-1714) over the Buddhists of Southern Mongolia and Djebtsun Damba Khutukhta (rje btsum dam pa) in Northern Mongolia. The reincarnations of the latter were to play an outstanding role in the history of the Mongolian Sangha and Mongolian state itself up to the early twentieth century¹³⁴.

¹³⁴ The author has had several audiences with the present incarnation of

The Oirats, on the contrary, did not recognize Manchu rule and moreover, on their part, strove to influence their neighbors and particularly the Mongolian speaking world to rely among other things on the religion. The social-political role of the Buddhist Sangha of the Oirats depended on the hierarchy of lamas, their role in the system of state administration and the influence of Buddhist doctrines on state ideology.

The evidence points to the fact that in the fifteenth century the Buddhist monks of the Oirat Khanate were not numerous, which is also characteristic of the following centuries as well. Nevertheless, they had a significant influence on the Oirat khans and their role in the society depended, first of all, on the political agenda of the Oirat Confederation formed at the time. The Oirat lamas were, as a rule, born into nobility [Jagchid, 1971:58]. For example, the sixteenth century saw a number of monks who came from the Oirat Khan families and one of these was Neiji Toin who has already been mentioned. This famous preacher also contributed to the fact that in 1616, when he came to his father in Dzungaria with a visit, the sons of famous Oirat Khans were ordained as lamas - one from each family - including the Dzungar Khan Khara-Khula's, the Derbet Taishi Dalai's, the Khoshout Khan Kudulen-Ubashi's and other royal families. Among the

the Bogdo Gegen Djebtsun Damba Khutukhta IX; during these meetings the Bogdo Gegen expressed his worries over the religious situation concerning not only Mongolians but also Kalmyks, Buryats and Tuvinians. He visited Russia on several occasions and was the second Tibetan religious leader (after Ven. Kirti Tsenshab rinpoche) to give the Kalachakra teachings in Russia (in 2003).

newly ordained lamas was also the foster son of the Khoshout Khan Baibagas, the future Zaya Pandit. It should be pointed out that it is these people who became monks for the teachings themselves and not for mundane reasons that were the elite of the Oirat Sangha. The majority of outstanding Buddhist preachers came from their numbers.

In terms of this discussion of interest is the question concerning the recognition of the two famous Oirats as “reincarnations”; these are Galdan Boshogtu Khan (died in 1697) and Sumba Khambo, the historian and religious figure. Galdan Boshogtu was the sixth son of Batur Khuntaiji and when a child he was recognized as the reincarnation of Lobsan Tenzin Gyatso (blo bzang bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 1605-1643/4), the popular Geluk School leader. Sumba Khambo of the Bagatud Khoshout clan was the fourth child in the family of Dorge-Dash and Dashtso (probably a Dzungar). He was proclaimed the fourth reincarnation of Sumba Shabdrun Lobsan Damba Gyaltsan, the Gon-lun monastery abbot [Bira, 1960:19]. Famous Neiji Toin and Zaya Pandit received their ranks of “Khutukhta” (“reincarnation”) for their selfless devotion but not for the religious activities in their previous lives and that is why it is difficult to recognize them as the reincarnations in the proper sense of the word.

The tradition of lamas (mainly senior ones) in the noble families continued for a long time in Mongolia while it had stopped with the Oirats by the mid-eighteenth century. In the case of the Dzungar and Khoshout Khanates this was

connected with the fact that they were completely destroyed by China.

The issue of reincarnations among the Torgout who came back to China in 1717 needs a special study. According to A. Pozdneev, the institution of khubilgans spread among Oirats “in the period of the Manchu-Chinese wars in Dzungaria” when “the Derbet clan had to separate from the Oirat Confederation and move to Ulan Kham thus becoming the nearest neighbors of the Khalkha. There is no doubt that it was this proximity to Khalkha and interactions with the Khalkha that had a most unfortunate influence on Buddhism among the Derbet”¹³⁵ [Pozdneev, 1991:235 (ref. 1)], i.e. resulted in the appearance of khubilgans among them. Most likely, the Derbet in their turn had the influence on the Torgout who had come back and this, alongside the Qing policy, resulted in the development of the khubilgan system of the Torgout.

The Oirats, taking advantage of Buddhism as an ideological instrument, strove to stop the emergence among themselves of those who could aspire to a superior position in the established power hierarchy and in doing this they relied on the authority of the religion. The absence of ‘khubilgans’ is a sign of the highest degree of the Buddhist consciousness in the society if Buddhism has been understood not as a

¹³⁵ “в период маньчжуро-китайских войн в Чжунгарии”, (when) “поколение Дурбэтов должно было отделиться от союза и перекочевать в Улан Кам, явившись, таким образом, в ближайшем соседстве с Халхой. Нет сомнения, что именно это соседство Халхи и связь с Халхасами роковым образом повлияли на развитие буддизма среди Дурбэтов”.

ubiquitous religious concept but as the ideology of a powerful secular state.

Without any doubt, Buddhism was very important for the Oirats in the Middle Ages. The Oirats' worship of Tibet and Dalai Lama and the recognition of Tibet as the sacred land were in the interests of the Chinese who made attempts to use Lhasa for their own purposes. Aware of the Chinese manipulative strategy and a certain dependence of the Tibetan Buddhist schools hierarchy on Beijing, the Oirat leaders tried to maintain a certain degree of independence from the Tibetan leadership. Even Gushi Khan who strove to build a united power under the auspices of the Tsongkhapa's teachings and who was in fact the founder of the theocratic form of administration in Tibet with the Dalai Lama at its head, avoided giving all the power to the religious institution. This is evidenced by the fact that the Khan himself and his descendants were the autocratic rulers of the Snow land to be known in Tibetan historiography as the "Kings of Tibet".

The Oirats opposed the aggressive policy of the Manchu dynasty. They were the initiators of the All-Mongolian Congress of 1640 where one of the main issues on the agenda was the necessity to resist the new dangerous enemy on the part of China. Batur Khuntaiji demanded the cooperation of all the forces of Eastern and Western Mongolians against the aggressor who had already subjugated the Southern Mongolia. Unfortunately, as S. Kozin pointed out, "the Oirats ... were not only left alone to fight the Manchu but,

moreover, had to confront their so-called 'allies'¹³⁶ [Kozin, 1940:10], i.e. Eastern Mongolians.

The migration of Oirats to the Northern Tibetan lands, the Khoshout and Dzungar conflicts over their influence in Tibet and a growing number of Oirat monks (including the Kalmyk ones) aspiring to the Snow land showed to the Manchu dynasty that they had to, first, take control of Tibet before dealing with the freedom-loving nomads. The Manchu did not rely completely on the Buddhist pacifying effect and strove to stop the Oirat interactions with Lhasa, refusing even to let the monks to go to Tibet for education.

5.2. Buddhism and Nomad Society

In the Middle Ages religion was the backbone of a nomads' inner life and it was the driving force behind their activities in the outer world, their ethics and behavior. The basis of the religious views of Buddhists is formed by "ten virtuous acts". Their brief observation will give an insight into the core of the religious ideas and processes.

Thus, ten Buddhist virtues are:

- No killing (ahimsa)
- No stealing
- No improper sexual activity
- No lying

¹³⁶ "о́йраты... в борьбе с манджурами не только были предоставлены самим себе, но еще и должны были бороться со своими "союзниками".

- No slandering
- No harsh words
- No gossip
- No coveting
- No aversion
- No incorrect views.

The ten virtuous acts in the list above are included in the so called 'Noble Eightfold Path', which is the fourth noble truth¹³⁷. This path to freedom consists of the eight truths: Right View, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

One of the main Buddhist principles is the perception of all human beings and all things of nature, on the one hand, as equal to oneself, as part of oneself, and, on the other hand, the perception of oneself as part of nature and the whole world. This way the psychological barriers between man and nature were taken away. The law of karma let an individual realize his (her) responsibility for all his (her) acts, avoid bad intentions and actions and strive for self-improvement.

Buddha established some basic rules of conduct for his followers. They are usually known as Pancasila – Five Precepts: to refrain from injuring living beings; to refrain

¹³⁷ Thus there are four Noble Truths: 1) The Noble Truth of Suffering, 2) The Noble Truth of the Accumulation of Suffering, 3) The Noble Truth of the Elimination of Suffering, 4) The Noble Truth of the Path that Leads Away from Suffering.

from stealing; to refrain from sexual immorality; to refrain from lying; to refrain from intoxicants.

Of great importance for the preservation of a fine balance between the economic activities of the nomads and their environment was the spiritualization of the natural phenomena and processes by way of ascribing to them the powers and abilities of deities and patrons. The Buddhist mythology and cosmology brought these folk beliefs into order. The Buddhist pantheon included a great variety of Buddhas, deities, semi-gods, positive and negative beings, depending on particular localities where the religion spread. Thus, Buddhist mythology includes animals and plants which played a special role in the life and activities of Buddha: deer were the first listeners of the Buddha's first teaching; serpents (nagas) preserved his teachings of ultimate wisdom (prajnaparamita); lotuses arose under the new-born Gautama' heels, when he made the first steps; under the Bodhi tree Gautama reached Enlightenment, etc. According to the cosmology of Buddhism, there are numerous worlds round the mountain of Meru (Sumeru), the seat of Buddhas and deities. According to Buddha's teaching, any world (ours, for example,) consists of three spheres: the Sensuous Realm (Kamaloka), the Realm of Form (Rupaloka) and Formless Realm (Arupaloka). Each loka comprises several planes where there are such realms as hell and paradise, the world of animals and realm of spirits, the realm of demons and that of people, the sphere of Buddhas, etc. Every being has to pass through rebirths according to the law of karma in these spheres and thus there is an interdependence and interrelation of everybody and everything.

This religious interpretation of the world was a way of mastering this world. The faith was a form of religious understanding and interpretation of the people's everyday life, it defined the norms, according to which some acts were allowed while others forbidden, and thus it laid the foundations of moral standards in the interactions with the world.

The Oirats set great and exceptional store by Buddhism for the progressive and positive development of their society. The religions of the past, such as Nestorian Christianity, had prepared the ground for this and that is why Buddhism, first in the Uyghur form, then Tibetan, was able to incorporate smoothly into their ideological and social infrastructure without significant transformations of their behavioral stereotypes and form the basis of the cultural, political and, in a sense, economic life of Western Mongolians.

No forced measures were used to promote Buddhism among Mongolian speaking population but it was actively supported by their ruling classes. This is quite obvious, for example, from the Tushetu Khan's¹³⁸ edict (of the Geluk School period) which said "I'll give a horse to whoever learns by heart the summary of the Doctrine, and a cow to whoever can recite the Yamantaka dharani by heart!" [Heissig, 1987:36]. Shamanism was banned; thus Zaya Pandit demanded that the shamanistic idols be burnt, those who invited shamans for performing ceremonies were to be fined while shamans

¹³⁸ It has been mentioned above, A. Pozdneev believed that the Geluk teaching came to the Tushetu Khan's land from Dzungaria [Pozdneev, 1883:107].

themselves (both men and women) were to pass through the smoke of the burnt dog feces [Norbo, 1999:64].

The degree of the social-cultural, economic development of Oirat society, as well as its geographic situation, determined the character and effect of the Buddhist influence on the Oirats and the adaptation of the religion to the existing structure of the society in question. In this respect it is worth remembering the impact of the clan divisions of the nomads on the religious institution. As with the Dzungar Oirats the state administration instruments were closely connected to the clan groupings of the society [Chernishev, 1990:66-67], this character of the state organization had its effect on the Buddhist Sangha as well. S. Kozin was absolutely right when he wrote that the development of Oirat feudal structures did not take place on the ruins of largely destroyed and disconnected clan and family loyalties and alliances, as happened with Eastern Mongolians, but grew into these. He believed, that the sustainability of the Oirat clan organization could be seen in the surprising fact that it lasted with the Kalmyks of the Volga up to the October Revolution. At the same time “the Oirats’ awareness of their clan unity was quite effective and profound”¹³⁹ [Kozin, 1941:56]. This specific feature of the society resulted in the fact that there was no chance for the Sangha to develop a unified, centralized hierarchy of lamas. Thus, each of the Oirat ethnic groups had lamas organized into their own hierarchical structure. This can be illustrated, for example, by the fact that

¹³⁹ «у ойратов... народное сознание своего племенного единства было
действенно и сильно».

even the title of “Baksha” (the temple abbot, head of a local community) had different meanings for different groups: with the Torgout it was the head of a khurul while the Derbet used it to refer to any of their lamas [Zhitetsky, 1892:43]. Besides, the lamas of a khurul could refuse an audience to a person who belonged to a different clan or family.

This specific situation with lamas in the Oirat society resulted from their complete dependence on their khans. There was another aspect to the interest of the secular power in Buddhism: this was the idea of unity which had special importance in terms of the Oirat Confederation. Therefore, it may be concluded with a certain degree of confidence that Buddhist preachers, when among Oirats, tried to win their khans’ support and thus contributed to the growth of their centralized state which in fact was built in the mid-fifteenth century. Probably, as early as that Buddhism had a strong position as the ideological basis of the state, i.e. the top of the Oirat society. This very feature of Buddhism which helped to sanctify a united state against factionalism was an advantage at its early stage of establishment in India where Buddhists were allies of the rulers of the old Indian states in their struggle against clan autonomy [Bongard-Levin, 1973:235].

The role of Buddhism in the ideology of states has been defined by A. Martinov; he wrote, that the countries of South-East and Central Asia illustrate convincingly that Buddhism was not only able to play the role of an official religion and official ideology but it also gave an example of its theocratic forms of government as it was in Tibet. “Moreover, even in those cases when Buddhism failed to

usurp ideologically the power institutions, it, nevertheless, took great pains to adapt to the existing political ideology and become an essential, if not principal, part of that”¹⁴⁰ [Martinov, 1982:11].

Outside the Indo-Tibetan-Buddhist cultural area, Buddhism found itself in the zone of influence of Christianity and Islam (for example, in connection with the departure of part of Oirats to Russia) where it continued its development within the framework of its principal doctrines. Therefore, while discussing the history of Buddhism of Oirats in the period under study, we will have to touch upon the Buddhist faith of the Kalmyks of Russia where in the late sixteenth century Kho-Urlyuk Khan of the Torgout left with the majority of his people. Some part of the Derbet headed by Dalai Taishi joined the Torgout. The reasons for this separation and departure can be seen in the gradual weakening of the Torgout’s position. After they lost the battle at the Irtysh River to the army of Eastern Mongolians of Cetsen Khuntaiji Khutukhta in 1562, the Torgouts could not compete with the Dzungars, whose Khan Khara-Khula who aspired to the leading role in the Oirat world.

So, in terms of the present discussion it seems both necessary and appropriate to deal with some particular aspects of the history of Buddhism of Kalmyks. The ties between the Oirats of Central Asia and Russian Kalmyks continued to be quite

¹⁴⁰ “Мало того, даже там, где буддизму не удалось идеологически подчинить себе институт власти, он приложил немалые усилия к тому, чтобы приспособиться к существующей политической идеологии и стать ее если не главной, то, во всяком случае, существенной частью”.

close, though for the relative isolation from Buddhist centers the Buddhism of the latter underwent some conservation. This allows drawing some parallels with the Buddhism of the Central Asian Oirats within the period under study. In this respect it is appropriate to cite A. Pozdneev who pointed out that “the inside organization of the Lamaist community of our Kalmyks remained the same for the first hundred or even one hundred fifty years after their arrival in Russia the way it was in Dzungaria...”¹⁴¹ (cited from: [Avlyaev, 1977:61]).

Despite the fact that Kalmyk khans always had lamas (Shazhin lamas) by their side, regarded by the rest of lamas as their heads, all the Kalmyks, nevertheless, recognized only the Dalai Lama as their superior religious authority and worshipped him as the head of the Kalmyk Buddhist Sangha. With the beginning of the Russian period in the Kalmyk history the Geluk School predominance had become quite obvious: missions sent to the Dalai Lama were frequent, the Kalmyk lamas went for their education to the “Yellow Hat” monasteries, it was the Dalai Lama who handed the regalia of the khan power, etc. The reception of the khan title from the highest Tibetan hierarch was interpreted by the society as an act of sanctification of the chief khan’s right to power. It was this way that the khan’s personage and power underwent sanctification while in the past¹⁴² it used to take the form of

¹⁴¹ “Внутренний строй ламайской общины у наших калмыков в течение первой сотни и даже первых полтораста лет по перекочевке в Россию оставался тот же, что и был в Зунгарии”.

¹⁴² It is outside the scope of the present work to deal with such a complex aspect of the issue as the reception of power granted by the Eternal Heaven.

the State Teacher (Tutor) institution by the khan (Khagan). Now it was the Dalai Lama who granted the right to become the Khan of Oirats (and thus the power over the whole people). Y. Kichanov, the reputed Sinologist, was right when he noted that with Mongolian speaking peoples the central authority uniting both religious and political powers was embodied in the personage of the ruler [Kichanov, 1997:290].

The sacralization of power was of objective necessity because Kalmyks lived at a great distance from their religious center (Tibet) but close to the Muslim and Christian communities. Thus, if the khan received his regalia in the Dalai Lama's name¹⁴³ it meant the approval by the superior spiritual authority of the khan's right to rule over his people and state, as well as to protect the religion. The ruler who had done damage or might have caused damage to Buddhism and who did not look after his people, as a rule, did not receive the Dalai Lama's "tamga".

The Japanese scholar I. Yumiko has devoted a special study to the issue of the importance of the khan title granted by the Dalai Lama [Yumiko, 1992]. The first Oirat khan to be granted the title and royal regalia was Gushi Khan who received his title from the 5th Dalai Lama. The approval of the superior hierarch of Tibet was also granted to Gushi's descendants – Dayan and Dalai in 1663 and 1671 respectively. In 1678 the title was granted to Galdan

¹⁴³ V. Bakunin's work contains an interesting account of the ceremony devoted to the reception of the "edict granting the khan title" by Tseren Donduk Khan on the marshes of the Volga in 1735 [Bakunin, 1995:139-146].

Boshogtu Khan. As I. Yumiko points out the full form of the title of these khans was “tenzin khan” (bstan 'dzin), or the khan-protector of Buddhism. However, it should be noted that approximately at the same time when Gushi received his title of “tenzin khan” the title “khan” was received by Daichin of the Russian Torgout. But the situation with some internal discord within the Kalmyk Khanate at the time, as well as tension between Daichin and his son Monchak (Puntsok) whom the father had handed over the power to in 1661, influenced the Dalai Lama’s choice: in 1657 he granted the title “khan” to Ochirtu Cetsen of the Khoshout who had Qinghai (Northern Tibet) as their pasture land. “On the basis of this fact, we would suggest that the title of Khan without “bsTan 'dzin” had the meaning of Oyirad khan... as khan of the Oyirad” [Yumiko, 1992:508]. Thus, for example, Ochirtu Cetsen was the first to be recognized as the Khan of the Oirats but after his death there was a break when nobody received the title because of the internal strife among Oirats and Kalmyks, as well as some problems in Tibet itself (the 5th Dalai Lama’s death in 1682). Only in 1697 the title “khan of the Oirats” was granted to Ayuka of the Torgout and since this time his descendants up to the last Ubashi Khan (who departed with the majority of Kalmyks back to China in 1771) had been regarded by the Dalai Lama as khans of the Oirats (with appropriate royal symbols granted to them).

Thus, the long-standing ambition of the Torgout khans to become the heads of the Oirat Confederation came true. Notably, it is since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that the khans and noyons of this Oirat group had developed anti-Dzungar attitudes. To be recognized as a

superior authority by other Oirat khans the Torgout khans had to rely sometimes on force against those who disobeyed. The military activities, though of a limited scale, took place on the vast expanses – from the Volga area to Southern Siberia as the Kalmyk and Dzungar Khanates had a long common border lying mainly through the territory of contemporary Kazakhstan. The rivals, however, did not try to destroy each other remembering their close relationship. The problem was that the Torgout khans aspired to be *primus inter pares*. However, it should be noted that the Kalmyk khans refused to support the Manchu-Chinese army in their wars against Dzungaria which was asked by the Chinese emperors. Having large pasturelands in southern Russia and a number of neighboring ethnic groups under their partial control, the Kalmyk khans were interested in preserving Dzungaria as a powerful force against the aggressive policy of Qing China in Central Asia, as well as a buffer state to cross over on their way to Tibet.

There was also a role assigned by China to Tibet in pacifying the Dzungar, especially to its spiritual and secular leader the Dalai Lama. The Chinese side regarded the Dalai Lama's efforts to normalize the relationships between Beijing and the Oirat headquarters as a great success. From the 5th Dalai Lama's Autobiography: "A little discord having arisen in the governmental affairs between Chinese and the Western Mongols (Oirats as a whole – B.K.), I offered such proofs of the fact that the governance of the Western Mongols would (in future) be good, as that the princes of the Blue Lake (i.e. Khoshouts of Kukunor – B.K.) would ... offer ample goods, principally horses, as compensation to the Emperor; that the

border territories would be clearly distinguished; and that both sides would bind themselves to a law..." [Ahmad, 1970:195]. For the same purpose the Chinese manipulated the heads of other Tibetan schools whose teachings were widespread among Oirats.

For all their powerful influence, the Geluk never tried to drive away their religious rivals from the Kalmyk (Oirat) society. Unfortunately, the absence of evidence concerning the issue does not allow any conclusions to be drawn with a certain degree of confidence about the presence of any other Schools, except for the Geluk¹⁴⁴. It may be assumed, though, that these might have been different Kagyu sub-schools.

It has already been mentioned in the Introduction to the present work that the issue of particular Tibetan Buddhist schools' existence among Kalmyks has been discussed in a number of works. However, the conclusions made were not always convincing; they were made for the absence of comprehensive works on the history of Oirat and Mongolian Buddhist traditions and without a careful study of Tibetan primary sources. That is why it seems doubtful that these Buddhist schools were known to the Oirats in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but their spread among Kalmyks at a later stage, for example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may be quite plausible.

¹⁴⁴ The point in question is the identification of the school name, as there is a general idea in scholarship that Kalmyks differentiated between "shar shajin" (Kalm. Yellow faith) and "ulan shajin" (Kalm. Red faith) [Rovinsky, 1809:200-201].

There is also another approach to the study of the issue of different Tibetan Buddhist schools of Oirats and Kalmyks demonstrated by the examination of the Kalmyk thangka dated back by experts to the early twentieth century [Batiyeva, 1992, ill. 14]. The caption to the thangka says “sitting on the lotus pedestal, the lama is wearing a robe indicating the follower of the Sakyapa School...”¹⁴⁵ [Batiyeva, 1992:121]. However, the commentary seems to be doubtful. The thangka represents a monk sitting in lotus position, his left hand holding a manuscript on his lap and his right hand held in dharmachakramudra. The monk is wearing a red robe with a red cap on his head. What is unusual about his appearance is that, firstly, the lama’s cap is not only of the red color (red-hat lama)¹⁴⁶ but it has three (four?) bands which indicates that it is a pandit’s cap. Since the early stage of Buddhism any individual holding the scholarly degree of “pandit” has been wearing such a cap as a distinctive sign and it does not matter to which school he belongs. Secondly, the next point for discussion is the monk’s blue shirt which is usually worn by the Bon or Nyingma lamas. Though, in ancient India there was a custom for a nobleman ordained into monks to wear a shirt of the blue color, this was not widespread among the nomads. Thirdly, there is evidence to

¹⁴⁵ “Сидящий на лотосовом подножии лама в одеянии приверженца школы Сакьяпа...”

¹⁴⁶ To identify the monk represented on the thangka as belonging to the Sakya School on the basis of his read robe and red cap seems incorrect because all Tibetan Buddhist schools have the same kind of dress, the only exception being the Geluk monks who wear yellow hats. Besides, the Sakya monks used to wear close-fitting round brimmed caps, not pointed crown ones [Pal, 1983:82].

believe that the monk's robe inside is black (or dark blue)¹⁴⁷, a detail absent on thangkas representing monks of different Tibetan Buddhist schools.

At this point the author of the present work believes it is necessary to express his gratitude to his spiritual teacher Geshe Sodnam Rinchen for his exhaustive elaboration on this hard issue.

Proceeding from the discussion above, it may be concluded that the monk on the Kalmyk thangka must have been either a Nyingma or Bon follower, the two teachings sometimes being difficult to differentiate. Thus, it may also be concluded that Russian Kalmyks used to have lamas of various Tibetan Buddhist traditions.

As far as the relationships of Buddhism with other religions, including those professed by some subjects of the Oirat states, are concerned, it should be taken into consideration that, in contrast to the Revelation Faiths, intolerance is not in the Buddhist line. The underlying related principles for this approach are twofold: firstly, Buddhism proceeds not from the text revealed by the God but from the idea that Buddha himself called to think over again and again. Thus, Buddha told, that monks and scholars should ponder on his words and analyze them the way gold is processed, being first melted, then cleaned and finally polished, and only then make them

¹⁴⁷ Of interest is to point out that to wear a blue outdoor dress seemed to be quite characteristic of Kalmyk lamas; thus, baksha Manchuda Borinov, who played quite a considerable role among Kalmyk immigrants in Yugoslavia in the twenties last century, used to wear "the dark-blue robe of a priest" [Smitek, no place and date, p. 5].

their own, but not for the sake of showing their respect for him [Geshe Wangyal, 1994:70].

Secondly, in contrast to other world religions, Buddhism has no strict structure and, consequently, there is no control over “what is prescribed from above” and mundane matters of an individual. To be successful, new interpretations of the Buddha’s pronouncements had to develop comprehensive theoretical foundations, but even in case of their absence they were not proclaimed as heretical and wrong. Much depended also, on particular historical circumstances of a society’s life and functioning. Consequently, any transformation of the society’s living conditions to correspond to certain “primary values” of the religion was out of the question. Buddhism does not have to conform to any particular social stage, lifestyle, etc.

According to P. Kafarov, the famous Russian Orientalist, already at the Second Buddhist Assembly in Vaishali (the first half of the fourth century BC) which was held 110 years after Buddha’s nirvana, while concluding the meeting, the chairmen established the rule which was to become the criterion to check the truth and importance of new treatises and views to appear in the Buddhist world. This rule was as follows: “Everything which corresponds to the existing moral resolutions and corresponds to the spirit of the Buddha’s teachings should be recognized as complying with the charter whether this has existed since old times, exists at present or will start to exist. Everything to the contrary of these should not be accepted, as not complying to the Buddha’s teachings, whether this has existed since old times, exists at present or

will start to exist”¹⁴⁸ [Palladius, 1909:68-69]. That is why, O. Rosenberg pointed out, Buddhism does not require one to believe in the sacred texts; all the Buddhist fundamental ideas have undergone close verification by the Buddhist philosophers themselves on the basis of the objective critical theory of knowledge [Rosenberg, 1991:41].

Buddhists recognize the existence of a variety of deities and superior beings that, as well as people and other living beings, have their own karma and are within the Wheel of Samsara. Obviously, for the Oirats who had professed Buddhism since the thirteenth century, peaceful coexistence of religions was a norm of their life. Thus, the Russian Orthodox priest A. Vorontsov pointed out in “The Astrakhan Diocese Newsletter” (#2, 1875) that fanaticism was not characteristic of the Kalmyks in their interactions with individuals having other religious beliefs as compared, for example, with Islamite Tatars or some of Russian Old believers and Molokanins [Missionary Symposium, 1910:23]. Another Orthodox priest Parmen Smirnov agrees with him, noting: “Kalmyk nomads have a special respect for religious objects whether they belong to their khuruls or other churches! They formulate their views in a very ordinary

¹⁴⁸ “Все, что согласно с существующими нравственными постановлениями и с духом учения Будды, должно быть признано уставным, существовало ли то с давних времен, существует ли в настоящее время или явится после; а все, что не согласно с ними, хотя бы то существовало и прежде, или существует в настоящее время, или явится позже, должно быть навсегда отвергнуто и не считаться с учением Будды”.

saying 'religions are different but God is one'!"¹⁴⁹ [Smirnov, 1999:81].

It has been mentioned above that Buddhism was able to establish an easy interaction with local cults and religious beliefs; the attitude of Tibetan Lamaism to traditional animist views is characterized by a combination of opposite principles: practice is based on the belief in the existence of the soul while the concept is not accepted by the doctrine [Gerasimova, 1989:67]. The Oirat local cults were characterized by the spiritualization of space (forest zones, valleys, rivers, pastures, etc) which had patron deities. The reasons for their considerate attitude to land and water, including the influence of Buddhism on this approach, have been discussed in a rather detailed way in the works on the ethnography and culture of the nomads. Buddhism looked at the man within his natural context defining his place in the natural world. It is this idea that contributed to the initial close relations between Buddhism and paganism also characterized by seeing man first of all within the context of his surrounding natural circumstances. At the same time the religion underwent transformation to become closer to popular understanding; according to O. Rosenberg, popular Buddhism is a popular form of its theory but incorporating the results of the creative effort of folk religious fantasy and numerous non-Buddhist elements [Rosenberg, 1991:51].

¹⁴⁹ "Калмыки-кочевники с особенным уважением относятся к священным предметам не только своих хурулов, но и всех других исповеданий! Они свои убеждения выражают в самом обыкновенном изречении: "вера разная, но Бог один!"

In the war time Mongolians and Oirats were under the influence of their syncretic culture while later Buddhism was singled out of it to grow dominant; “considerate attitude to nature rooted in the Mongolian mentality imposed a certain limit on their destructive impulses towards the cultures and nations subjugated by them”¹⁵⁰ [Drobishev, 2002:225]. As far as the nomads’ treatment of other nations, seen as the object for satisfying their expansionist needs, is concerned, it may be appropriate to give Erenzhen Khara-Davan’s¹⁵¹ opinion with certain reservations. Thus, he pointed out that Genghis Khan divided nations into two categories: those who were worthwhile for the matter of civilization and those who were a hindrance in the way to peaceful international interactions [Erenzhen Khara-Davan, 1991:58]. In accordance with his perception of the people, Genghis Khan conducted a policy which allowed him and his descendants to build a vast empire. Obviously, referring to this epoch, some scholars point out that Buddhism finally resulted in the weakening of the Mongolian people and loss of their military nature. This is an exaggerated view “of the influence of Buddhism on the character of Mongolians as a nation; their successful struggle against Chinese for independence demonstrated that Mongolians were not short of their famous military talents. In the same way Tibetans posed as aggressors and expansionists

¹⁵⁰ “укорененная в монгольском менталитете осторожность по отношению к природе в какой-то мере сдерживала их разрушительные побуждения по отношению к культуре покоряемых народов”

¹⁵¹ Erenzhen Khara-Davan (1883-1942) was a Kalmyk educator, doctor and politician who became a historian during the time of emigration and joined the Eurasians, the movement that united some Russian immigrants.

after their conversion to Buddhism in the seventh century...”¹⁵² [Bartold, 1967:56]. As far as the Oirats in the Geluk period of their religious history are concerned, at this very time they managed to build their three independent states in Eurasia that were on a par with such powerful empires as the Chinese and Russian and thus became famous throughout Central Asia.

The active foreign policy of Oirats was determined not so much by their aggressive impulses towards the neighboring ethnic groups but rather by the force of circumstances. Thus, the Kazakh, Kirghiz and other Turkic nations in the west, Chinese in the south and Mongolians in the east were not against expanding into the vast lands of Dzungaria. To oppose these aggressive plans meant to confront the enemies and defeat them. These objective circumstances limited, to a certain degree, the realization of the peaceful Buddhist principles and contributed to the geopolitical strategy of the Oirat Confederation.

The power of the Oirat states grew chiefly with the increasing number of their subjects (often at the expense of defeated nations), cultivation of the Buddhist idea of the common and personal freedom and confidence in the realization of the Oirat dream about powerful Bumba Land. The successful expansion of the Oirat-Mongolian armies into Central Asia and Southern Siberia and their settlement in the

¹⁵² “влияние буддизма на изменение народного характера монголов; успешная борьба монголов с китайцами за свою независимость показала, что монголы не утратили прежних военных качеств. Таким же образом тибетцы именно после принятия буддизма, в VII в., выступили в роли завоевателей...”

subjugated areas was in fact the result of a well-planned policy, taking into consideration the cultural and everyday life peculiarities of the local populations in those new territories. Therefore it seems more appropriate to find reasons for the growth of the Oirat states not only in the military, economic, political and other circumstances outside them, which may lead to superficial conclusions, but also in a well-planned religious policy which played its role in the growth of these states with a diversity of religions. This policy was determined not only by the political sophistication of Oirat leaders but also by corresponding Buddhist principles.

The following fact should also be pointed out: among the population under the Oirat rule Muslims usually predominated and, though there was some friction between them on the religious basis, this was of a small scale never to grow into something like a religious war. There was never any persecution of the Islam in the Oirat states (as well as of any other religion as long as Oirats themselves were left alone). Oirat khans in fact appreciated the educated and energetic Muslims and often used them to fulfill some responsible assignments.

Thus, in the early Middle Age Oirats widely relied on Persian specialists in the fields of astronomy, medicine and arms. In the Yuan period, for example, the famous Central Asian Muslim figure Said Ajal Shamal-din was appointed the chief of the Yuan colonization policy office in the province of Yunnan [Rossabi, 1981:287].

Muslims were Oirat trade dealers during their journeys to China. According to the Chinese primary sources, one can find Muslim names, such as Pir-Muhammed, Ala-ud-din, Ahmad, Ibrahim among the names of the members of the so called “tributary missions” [Serruys, 1977:375]. This can be justified, in Serruys’s opinion, by the fact that “few Mongols, if any, were professionals (in trade – B.K.) while many Central Asians were experienced professional tradesmen” [Serruys, 1975:42]. In this respect the scholar points out the Oirat missions to the Ming. Thus, for example, the mission sent to the Emperor by Esen Khan in 1449 had 2524 members and a quarter of them (752 people) were “Mohammedan traders” [Serruys, 1975:42].

Oirats continued their practice of including Muslims in their missions, when interacting with Russia. The Muslims were frequently used not only as interpreters but also as official representatives. Thus, the first Oirat embassy that arrived in Moscow in 1607 included only “Kalmyk Tatars”¹⁵³, the same happened in the following years though ambassadors were more often natural Oirats [Kotvich, 1919:1205]. For example, in the mid-seventeenth century Ablai Taiji of the Khoshout sent several times Mullah Irki as his ambassador for negotiations in Moscow; Ochirtu Cetsen’s and his son Galdama’s envoys were Izmail and Baisungur [Materials, 1996:44, 50]; in the 1670’s visits were paid to Posolsky Prikaz (literally: “Ambassadorial office”) by Galdan

¹⁵³ However, for the Russian authorities who in fact for the first time encountered Oirats face to face the latter could have been Tatars for absence of any information about them.

Boshogtu Khan's ambassadors Devlet Shih and Khoja Sebeddi [Materials, 1996:247, 323].

It can also be added here that the evidence we have shows that Galdan Boshogtu was probably one of the few Oirat khans who made clever use of the friction between various Islam directions in his expansionist policy (for example, in Khotan where the Khan supported the “White Hats” against their enemies – the “Black Hats”¹⁵⁴). Muslims were actively engaged in the state and, even, in the religious affairs in Dzungaria (as members of the missions sent to Tibet) up to the time the Khanate was destroyed by the Qing. L. Petech wrote: “it’s surprising to see a Muslim in charge of a Lamaist mission, whose purpose was in the main religious; it’s a striking example of the good understanding reigning between the various religions in Central Asia in this period” [Petech, 1972:199].

It follows from what has been said above that, obviously, Oirat khans proceeded from personal qualities of people, when assigning them to implement their political, economic, social and other objectives. It should be added that this approach was characteristic of the upper circles of the Mongolian society. It was no accident that Genghis Khan at his time drew Uyghur scholars, as well as Chinese, Tibetans and representatives of other nations close to himself.

¹⁵⁴ These are names of the two directions of the Sufi Order of Nakshbandiya.

CHAPTER VI. TANTRISM AND SHAMANISM

6.1. Lama Anjja and development of Tantrism

Kalmyks (Oirats, in general) are the only Buddhist nation in the world who, due the migrations, often met with different religious outlooks, including Buddhism. Tantrism and various systems of Yoga practices were of considerable importance among Western Mongolians. This tradition in Buddhism is called Vajrayana; and its methods aim at reaching the Buddha state during one lifetime, thus avoiding long cycles of rebirths. A.A. Terentyev was right when he pointed out that the influence of Tantrism on Mongolian speaking peoples, as well as on Tuvinians and Altai peoples, largely determined the character of their Buddhist culture [Buddhism, 1992:89].

Mysticism and dharani-mantras of the Yamantaka system became important in the views of the Oirats thanks to Neiji Toin's activities [Heissig, 1987:39-40]. Tantrism of various theories and teachings, especially those of Kalachakra and Shambhala by Mongolian speaking nations. It is suggested, that the enthusiastic welcome of Kalachakra by the Mongolians and Tuvinians resulted probably from the association by them of their own countries with the legendary northern land of Shambhala [Berzin, 2002:42].

Unfortunately, the history of Tantrism and Tantric monasteries of the Oirats of Dzungaria and Kalmyks from the Volga is still *terra incognita* in Eastern studies. As our preliminary analysis of the issue has shown, the Oirat and Kalmyk Sangha histories abound in mysteries intertwined in a surprising and unusual way with the history of China, Russia and other countries.

Now we would like to present some conclusions made while examining a text written in Tibetan in the early nineteenth century [Gibson, 1990]. It is one of the rare sources which relate some of the ways in which Tantrism was spread and established among the Oirats and Kalmyks. Relying mainly on the translation made by T. Gibson, we have only specified some of its particular statements. The text was published by T. Gibson with a commentary based on his own preliminary analysis. From his comments it follows that its author was a reputed lama of the Kereit clan, whose name was Jama Bakshi. The manuscript was given to Gibson by Ms. Deva Ninbo, one of the Torgout nobility, who now lives in the USA and who wanted to publish it “to preserve the information that it contains”.

The text is also a rare source on the Tibetan period of life of Anjja (or Anjjatan, Ancithan), the famous Kalmyk lama and contemporary of another outstanding lama whose name was Shakur, both of whom made great contributions to the history of Buddhism of the Kalmyks.

Thus, the source contains a brief description of the three outstanding events which turned out to be of considerable importance for the Buddhist future of Oirats. These were

associated with Anjja Lama who left “the Torgout country of Ijl (Volga) River” for his education in Tibet, and Khempotan Lama from the ruling family who arrived in Tibet from the country “of the Ili river Oirat Dzungar” to be educated in the Drepung monastery. Their teacher was famous Ngawang Tsонду (ngag dbang brtson ‘grus), the reputed Tantric teacher, the first incarnation and thus the founder of a line of reincarnations of Jetsun Jamyang Shadba (rje btsun ‘jam dbyangs bzhad pa), known for their outstanding role in the Geluk School history. The name of Jetsun Jamyang Shadba is often mentioned as he was one of outstanding Geluk leaders alongside the 3rd Dalai Lama, the 5th Dalai Lama and Panchen Lamas. According to F. Stcherbatsky, he was an interesting personality, whose works, dealing with almost all the fields of Buddhist theory, could make up a library [Stcherbatsky, 1988:109].

According to G. Tsybikoff, Ngawang Tsонду was born in the Amdo province in the north of Tibet; in 1669, when he was 20, he went to Central Tibet for his education [Tsybikoff, 1991, I:50]. Having demonstrated his outstanding abilities, he “was placed on the Gomang pedestal (faculty)” in 1700 [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:136]. His “interpretations on theology... were first introduced in the Gomang Datsan as guiding manuals, and at present they are standard almost at every theological faculty of Amdo, Mongolia and our Zabaikalye (lands behind lake Baikal – B.K.)”¹⁵⁵, noted G. Tsybikoff in the early twentieth century. Jamyang Shadba

¹⁵⁵ “толкования по богословию... были приняты за руководство сначала в гоманском дацане, а ныне ими руководствуются почти все богословские факультеты Амдо, Монголии и нашего Забайкалья”

had close contacts with Oirats; thus, as early as in 1703 he was invited to visit his homeland, Amdo, by Olet Prince Galdan-Erdeni-Jinon (probably, one of the Khoshut khans – B.K.) and was offered to found a monastery [Tsybikoff, 1991, I:50]. In 1710 Jamyang Shadba together with the 7th Dalai Lama received a seal from the Chinese Emperor. He became famous when in 1714 he completed “History of Bhairava Teachings”, and then two years later “organized the faculty of Tantrism in the Dashiyl-Chil monastery (built by him in the Amdo Province, known also as Lavrang (bla blang) – B.K.) and completed “A Chronology of the Religion”¹⁵⁶ [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:137]. This great Buddhist person died in 1722, according to Sumba Khambo [Pagsam-Jonsan, 1991:138]¹⁵⁷.

Jamyang Shadba was the Gomang (sgo mangs) College’s abbot between 1700 and 1707 and most likely during this period was the spiritual tutor of the two Oirat Lamas, mentioned above. There is no direct reference to this in the source in question, but it is pointed out that the two lamas were introduced to Jamyang Shadba immediately after their arrival in Tibet while he was already the abbot of Gomang.

Anjjatan Lama spent over 25 years in Tibet. There had been Kalmyk monks before him in Tibet and the text contains a

¹⁵⁶ “основал в (монастыре) Даший-чил тантрийский факультет и составил "Хронологию религии"

¹⁵⁷ There was a special study devoted to the works of the lama [P.I. Hadalov, L.Zh. Yampilov, B.D. Dandaron. A Description of the Works by Gunchen-Jamyang-Shadba-Dorje (1649-1723). Ulan-Ude, 1962]. Unfortunately, the work was beyond my reach.

reference to the Torgout place (mi thang) in Gomang. The point is that those who came to study at the monastery from one place belonged to the same clan or group and lived together. In these mitsans every clan had their own canteen, bedroom (khams tshan) and a hall for meetings (tshogs chen lha khang, or 'du khang). Thus, this reference to the Torgout mitsan shows a long standing education tradition of this Oirat group in Tibet and, in particular, in the Geluk monasteries so that it was singled out into an independent unit.

In this respect it is appropriate to give information from G. Tsibikoff's famous work where he gives the details about this aspect of the inside life and organization of Drepung. He pointed out, that every monk was to join a fraternity, called "kamtsan", according to the place of his origin. Large kamtsans are further subdivided into "mitsans" which are based on even closer clan relationships. Thus, when arriving in a monastery, Mongolians had to join the Gomang datsan in Drepung, the Jeba datsan in Sera and the Jyan-tse in Galdang. Then within the datsans Khalkha had to join the Samlo kamtsan while the rest of Mongolians were to join Khamdon. Finally, within the kamtsans, Khalkha made up a separate Khalkha mitsan, while the rest had three of them: Torgout had a separate Torgout mitsan, the rest of other Oirats, had a Tsokhas mitsan, and Southern Mongolians had a Churched, or Manchu, fraternity [Tsybikoff, 1991, I:151]. Accordingly, Anjatan lama lived in the Torgout mitsan, while Khempotan lama of Dzungaria was in the Tsokhas mitsan.

Anjja lama and Khempothan lama had to undergo three tests assigned by their teacher; after these the teacher made

predictions about the length of periods of the Buddha's teachings in their homelands which was to be long in the first case and short in the second one.

Of interest is also the fact that the text under discussion contains a reference only to one deity – Manjushri. The Rinpoche explained to his two disciples that this very superior deity could unite their karma and ambition. The appreciation of the significance of Manjushree and the approach, in general, remind us of the Kalachakra system where Manjushri-yashas, the sixth king of Shambhala, is worshiped as the author of one of the two main texts of Kalachakra (Concise Kalachakra-tantra)¹⁵⁸. Most likely, the two young monks made a thorough study of the Kalachakra teachings.

According to the text, Khempothan Lama built a tantric monastery in Dzungaria. Tantric monasteries were also built there by Agvan Tan-chen Changle Dava (1639-1681), the famous head of the Buddhists in this Khanate [Vuliji Bayar, 2001:328]. Probably, Anjja Lama also founded such khuruls in the Kalmyk steppes.

Thus, after many years spent on his education Anjja lama came back to the Volga, holding a high scholarly degree of Rabjamba. Before his departure he had an audience with the Dalai Lama who presented him with gifts – several thangkas. It should be added here that it is the 7th Dalai Lama that is implied by the author of the Tibetan manuscript under study

¹⁵⁸ The second text is a commentary to the “Concise Kalachakra-tantra” known as “Stainless Light”. It was written by Pundarika, the son of Manjushri-yashas.

when he mentions the meeting of the Dzungar lama with Kyabgon Gyalwa Rinpoche (another general name for Dalai Lamas). T. Gibson seems to be wrong when he believed that the Dzungar Lharamba had a meeting with the 6th Dalai Lama.

Unfortunately, the life and work of the Kalmyk lama has not been studied so far and that is why it is not possible at this point to give the exact dates of his return to his homeland, as well as elaborate on his works on religious matters. It is most likely, though, that the famous Erdniyevsky chief khurul (gser gtag chos gling) in the Kalmyk steppes was founded by Anjja lama. The popular name of the khurul - Anjan-khurul¹⁵⁹ - still remembered by the local people is a sign of their deepest respect for this man of faith.

The pupils nurtured by the lama were to become the elite of the Kalmyk Buddhist clergy who were, according to the author of the Tibetan text, the true followers of the Buddha's teachings in the Kalmyk society in the period under consideration. Of immediate interest are the first lines of the text dealing with the countries (or rather regions) with the Torgout population. As the Dzungar Khanate is only mentioned in the middle of the text, while towards the end it deals exceptionally with the Torgout, it may be concluded that the author tries to draw a clear line between the Buddhism of the Kalmyks and that of the Dzungars, i.e. between the line of the spiritual inheritance of the Anjjatan's

¹⁵⁹ T. Gibson points out [Gibson, 1990:83, note 1] that, according to his data, there are thirty six "temples of Anjja lama" but he has no knowledge as to where they are located or how they operate.

teachings and that of the Khempotan lama. With the fall of the Dzungar Khanate “their” teachings were lost while the line of the Torgout lama continued; his disciples were among those of Kalmyks who returned to Dzungaria in 1771.

One can only conjecture that the seven of his disciples mentioned in the text became well-known religious figures among the Kalmyks. These were Khaslun (haslun) and Nuskha Tashi (nusuhe bkra shis) of the Kereit clan, Tsultrim (tshul khrims) and Yonten (yon tan) of the Tsatan clan, Dragpa Tashi (grags pa bkra shis) of the Barun clan, Orgunjam Tashi (or gun byams bkra shis) of the Shabiner clan and Lodro Zangpo (blo gros bzang po) of the Khoshut clan. Some of them, probably the disciples of these disciples, left with Ubashi Khan for Dzungaria. Among those who left were obviously, Lama Lobsan Tudob (blo bzang mthu stobs) mentioned in the end of the text and the abbot of Samten Choiling (bsam gtan chos gling) monastery in Sinkiang, by whose order the text was written down.

At the beginning of seventeenth century the presence of lamas of the “Red Hat” traditions of Tibetan Buddhism became conspicuous in the Kalmyk steppes (this was also connected with the arrival of Oirats from Dzungaria). As has been mentioned above, those Oirats were first of all the followers of various Kagyu sub-schools and the Sakya School. At the same time, most likely, that the factor of loyalties of some ethnic subdivisions to particular Buddhist traditions became a less important factor. There appeared many famous lamas among Derbets. A more profound study of the history of Buddhism of Kalmyks from its beginnings

up to the seventies of the seventeenth century will probably give a more detailed picture of controversy and conflict of interests between different schools of Tibetan Buddhism in the Kalmyk steppes and, also, between these and shamanism, having incorporated many of the Buddhist elements.

5.2. The Political Impact on Religion and Revival of Shamanism

The first references to shamanism can be found in the Laws of 1640, while all the rest of sources containing data on the shamanism of Kalmyks belong to a later, Russian, stage in Oirat history, i.e. the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In one of my articles devoted to the problem of the time and causes of the revival of shamanism among Russian Kalmyks, I noted that this began the relative isolation from the religious center provoked the development of shamanism; on this basis further spread of Bon or Nyingma was possible [Geshe Wangyal, 1994:206-207]. Now another historic fact should be mentioned as its thorough examination may change an understanding of the history of Buddhism of Kalmyks in the period starting with the mid-eighteenth century (or, at least, with the second half of the eighteenth century).

Thus, in our opinion, the arrival of Buddhist lamas from Altai to join Kalmyks in the mid-eighteenth century was likely to have been another cause for the revival of shamanism of Kalmyks (though, it is not only shamanism that we should mention here, but this will be discussed later). Indeed, shamanism as an ideological and religious phenomenon

began to be associated with Kalmyks in the literature on the question only starting in the second half of the eighteenth century. Unfortunately, in Kalmyk studies, practically no attention has been paid to the arrival of the Altai clergy so far. At least, as far as I know, there is no paper on the history of Kalmyk Buddhism that has focused to any degree on this important historical fact.

The circumstances preceding the arrival of the Altai peoples (mainly the Telengid) to join the Volga Kalmyks in 1758 and the role of the representative of Kalmyk lamas in the event are as follows. On January 27, 1756 the State Collegium for Foreign Affairs sent a special edict to General Major N. Spitsin, the supervisor of Volga Kalmyks. It said that in view of the “Zengor” (Altai – B.K.) zaisangs and their leader zaisang Ombo’s appeal for the Russian protection, the Empress Elizabeth took a decision to satisfy their request and to allow the new subjects to join the Volga Kalmyks. Another edict of the Empress of May 2, 1756 addressed to the Governor of Siberia General Myatlev shows clearly the motives which were behind the decision of the imperial court to accept the Altai population under the Russian jurisdiction and assign them to live among Kalmyks.

The Altai zaisangs’ urgent request “to accept them under the protection of Her Imperial Majesty” was made under the force of circumstances as the Chinese army’s punitive expeditions aimed at the utter destruction of Dzungaria where the last Dzungar Khan Amursana revolted against the Chinese rule. Altai as one of the vassal territories of the Khanate supported their Khan who was in a predicament with

its army and the Altai nobility were well aware that after their expansion into Dzungaria the Chinese forces would head for their land. Under the circumstances the only way to rescue was seen as the appeal for the protection of the Russian weapon.

Meanwhile, Altai had been in the Russian zone of interest for a long time and since the desire to join the Empire was clearly indicated by the Altai people themselves it was the right moment “to take the chance and persuade Zengors (i.e. Altai people – B.K.) in every possible way”. The fall and destruction of Dzungaria was in the Russian interests as “for their special power proceeding from the numerical strength of Zengor (here Dzungar – B.K.) people, as well as at the expense of other neighboring people that they from time to time subjugated, the former Dzungar rulers posed a threat to Siberia as dangerous neighbors... Thus, this may be of use that the Zengor people would be weakened and degraded because of the internal strife if it happened between its owners now, or if the Chinese side expanded further as they are doing now without any involvement on our (i.e. Russian – B.K.) side. The weaker they are the safer will be the situation on the borderline in Siberia”. Obviously, “both in Southern Siberia and Turkistan there was a clash of interests between the Kalmyk and Russian sides” [Bartold, 1968:216].

The Empress believed it was impossible to leave the Altai people so that they could roam near the border on their pastures or move to Buryats (“Bratski Kalmyks”) because if Chinese “wanted to drive them away then it would be impossible for us not only to preserve, but also to protect

them". Another reason was also pointed out – "moreover, we cannot completely trust the Zengors themselves, who want our protection, for their changeable character".

As in Siberia no free places were found, the Collegium for Foreign Affairs thought it best to send the Altai people to the Volga Kalmyks, because "in this case they will have no chance for escape".

However, the Altai population (at least, part of them) did not want to move from their homeland to join Kalmyks. In their attempts to persuade the Russian authorities to let them stay on the home pastures, they resorted to all kinds of measures and tricks. For example, according to the Altai scholar G. Samayev, in December 1756 when the commander of the Kolivan-Kuznetsky line Degarriga made a round of the camps of the Altai people received into Russian jurisdiction, the Demichi Yaykash and Dabkhur gave him a girl as a present so that he let them stay and did not send to the Lower Volga region [Samayev, 1991:47].

To persuade the Altai zaisangs to migrate, the Russian government decided to use Kalmyks themselves. For this purpose in January 1756, alongside the letter to Spitsin, another letter was sent to the Kalmyk Khan Donduk Dashi which said that "he was immediately to choose one of his best zaisang and one of the priests... and add to them some ten ordinary Kalmyks... to send them to Tobolsk on official carts and horses..."¹⁶⁰ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:4].

¹⁶⁰ "чтоб вы немедленно выбрали из лучших ваших зайсангов одного человека, а к нему другого из полов ваших... а к ним и еще человек до десяти определили из рядовых калмык... которых отправить в

N. Spitsin asked Donduk Dashi to send zaisang Nugut (Naugat) and Gelung (lama) Jambo Jamo¹⁶¹ to deal with this sensitive matter with a special commentary concerning the latter, that “the priest who had been in those places might be suitable for the occasion and accomplishment of this urgent matter”¹⁶² [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:18], though he added he did not mind if any one else was sent. In accordance with Donduk Dashi’s order, on March 19 a Kalmyk group with zaisang Naugat and Gelung Biktyurgiin (Bioktergein) at the head left for Siberia. They arrived in Biysk on August 1756 and immediately set to accomplish the task they were assigned to. Their attempts to persuade the zaisangs and lamas to move to the Volga, however, were initially without any success. Then, they resorted to a fraudulent letter which they had prepared themselves: it was allegedly written by the Qing authorities and said that the Altai population was to be seized and sent into the inner part of China. The Altai peoples’ leaders believed that the letter was true and agreed to migrate.

The first and largest party of migrants set off as ‘a big kosh’ to the Volga from Biysk on July 20, 1757. According to the plan, a separate party of the baptized Altai peoples was to go

Тобольск на казенных подводах...”

¹⁶¹ This lama was one of the prominent figures on the political scene of the Kalmyk Khanate in the second quarter of the eighteenth century. He was Donduk Ombo Khan’s advisor and preserved influence under Donduk Dashi. Biktyurgiin lama was chosen for the mission by Donduk Dashi probably because Jambo Jamo was advanced in years; besides, the Khan wanted to have his lama by him in case there was a need in the religious authority to support the Khan.

¹⁶² “оной поп, по бытности его в тамошних местах, к такому случаю и к приведению надобнейшего дела, достаточны быть могут”.

to the town of Stavropol (a former fortress, built in the late 1730¹⁶³ especially for the baptized Kalmyks; present Tolyatti). However, soon the authorities decided to grant Russian citizenship to the Altai people on condition of their conversion to Christianity. G. Samayev pointed out that already in October 1758 the commander of the Siberian lines Frauyendorf issued an order to give the Russian protection only to those of “Zengors” who would convert to Christianity while the rest were ordered “to be driven away from the fortress” [Samayev, 1996:50].

While a plan for the organization of the Altai people’s migration to the Volga Kalmyks was prepared, special emphasis was made on the religious factor. The Empress’s edict pointed out the common religion of the nations; the importance of lamas and their significant role were taken into consideration by the Russian government while deciding to include a “pope” (Rus. for “priest”) into the delegation from the Kalmyk Khan.

There were also special instructions concerning the Muslim subjects of Dzungaria: “if there are any Bukhara and other Mahometans among the Zengor population who ask for Her Imperial Majesty’s protection, they must not be sent to Volga Kalmyks in any way”¹⁶³, as “that would not be the right decision”, because Kalmyks travel near the highland Muslim population of the Caucasus¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶³ “ежели между оными зенгорскими подданными, желающими подданства ея императорского величества, сколько ни есть будут бухарцев и других из махометан, и таковых в соединение с волскими калмыками ни при каковых обстоятельствах отпускать не надлежит”

¹⁶⁴ The Russian government made every effort to keep a close watch over

The information about the arrival of the new subjects of the Kalmyk Khanate can be found in the letter written by Donduk Dashi to Spitsin on October 22, 1758, in which the Khan reports about the arrival of over seven hundred families, who are sent to uluses [Samayev, 1996:49]. It is most likely that the majority of the Altai migrants were assigned to the Khoshoutovsky (Alexsandrovsky) ulus as here new clans of the Uryankha and Telengit-Dzungar appeared.

In his report addressed to the Empress the General Major N. Spitsin informed that “Zengors, the owners and uluses, travel a long distance from here (the Spitsin’s camp was located on the marshy side of the Volga river near Kamenny Yar town – B.K.) up to Rim-peski place”¹⁶⁵ [NA KR. coll. 36, list 1, doc. 330:110a]. He also mentioned the names of some Altai people such as Go Tseren, Dapkhur, Zariktu Khashka, and “Bolot, the son of Idek” who was a nephew of the Ombo zaisang, mentioned above [NA KR. coll. 36, list 1, doc. 330:101a-103].

the ethnic and religious situation in the Kalmyk Khanate and neighboring regions. It did not find possible to satisfy the Jan’s request to appoint her son Randul as the Khan of Kalmyks. Jan, a Kabardinian, was the second wife of Donduk-Ombo Khan (died on March 1741 – B.K.) and therefore, in the government’s opinion, as a Muslim she would always support the Kabardinians’ side [Palmov, 1922:48]. Donduk-Ombo himself made appeals to the Dalai Lama with the same request concerning the appointment of his son Randul as the Khan but the answer was negative; Donduk-Dashi, another descendant of Ayuka Khan, got the appointment [op. cit.].

¹⁶⁵ “зенгорцы с владельцами и улусами кочуют отсюда далеко, в урочище Рым-пески”

Among the migrants there were, of course, lamas. Thus, V. Kosmin points out that after the union of Altai with Russia many lamas were sent to Kalmyks on the Volga [Kosmin, 1996:33].

The question of the Altai population embracing Buddhism (probably, thorough the medium of the Dzungar) requires a special study beyond the scope of the present work. Here we would like to cite G. Samayev's point of view who believes that of all the Altai ethnic groups the Ak-Telengit and Altai-Telengit groups who had integrated most into the Oirat society were largely Lamaist in the mid-eighteenth century [Samayev, 1991:47]. It is also of interest to note that as early as 1609 (sic) Moscow made attempts to use Altai lamas ("murza" in the Russian materials) to persuade Oirats to become Russian subjects. Thus, in the report of the Tomsk voyevodas (the militant and civil commander of the district) Vassily Volynsky and Mikhail Novosiltsev about their contacts with "Black Kalmyks", dating back not prior than March 31, 1609, it is pointed out that in accordance with the edict of the Tsar and Great Knyaz (Prince) Vassily Ivanovitch (Tsar Vassily Shuisky - B.K.) of all Russia, they sent a special group of Cossacks to Oirats. For the mission to be a success the Cossacks "Bazhenka... with companions were ordered to take with them the best murza (i.e. lamas - B.K.) from among the White Kalmyks, who are trusted by the Black Kalmyks, and leaving the White Kalmyks, set off to the Black Kalmyks with those murza so that to invite the Black Kalmyks to the town of Tomsk... to get an allowance

from the Tsar”¹⁶⁶. However, the plan failed as the Altai lamas “refused to go to the Black Kalmyks because the Black Kalmyks moved further from them and waged a war against Altin Tsar and the Kazak horde...”¹⁶⁷ (here Eastern Mongolians and Kazakh) [Samayev, 1996:66-67].

It has been mentioned above that the Telengit were assigned to the Khoshoutovsky ulus. I. Zhitetsky, who visited Astrakhan Kalmyks in the late nineteenth century, mentioned the “Baga-Telengut” and “Iki-Telengut” clans among others in the Aleksandrovsky (Khoshoutovsky) ulus [Zhitetsky, 1892:122].

The history of the Altai population’s life among the Volga Kalmyks and the role of the Altai clergy in the history of Buddhism of the Kalmyks are the subjects which have practically not been touched upon in scholarship (there are only references to the Altai clans among Kalmyks). As it is beyond the scope of the present work to show the role of the Altai lamas in the Kalmyk society, here we will focus only on some aspects of this complex issue, especially concerning the shamanism of the Kalmyks.

In our opinion, the specific character of the Altai society, divided into those who embraced Buddhism (for example, the clans mentioned above) and those who remained shamanists,

¹⁶⁶ “Баженку... с товарыщи велели взять в Белых в колмаках лучших мурз колмацких, которым черные колмаки верят, и велели... ему из Белых колмаков итти в Черные колмаки с ними и черных колмаков велели звать в Томской город к... царскому жалованью”

¹⁶⁷ “не пошли в Черные колмаки, для тово, что черные колмаки от них откочевали далече и воюютца с Алтын царем и с Казачьей ордою”

reflected on their lamas who included many borrowings from shamanistic practices into their religious ceremonies. Though, of course, it should be noted that Buddhism, everywhere it spread, adapted to the local character of beliefs and customs, gradually incorporating indigenous deities into its own religious structures, as well as general religious views of the local populations.

In India Buddhism reckoned with the centuries old culture of Vedas and Upanishads, while in China, Japan and Tibet the religion reached the popular layers of societies only after their local gods were introduced into the Buddhist pantheon. Consequently, references made by some scholars to particular shamanistic elements existent among Kalmyks (and Oirats, as they presume), ascribing to them characteristics of a full-fledged religious and animistic phenomenon of the Kalmyk society in the period under consideration, cannot be taken seriously. In the long course of interactions between Buddhism and local beliefs, these elements have become an indissoluble part of the cult, liturgy and ritual practice of the first world religion as far as Oirats and Kalmyks are concerned (though, such borrowings are characteristic of all religions including world ones). There is a need for a special study devoted to the identification of shamanistic practices, rituals and ideas in the activities of lamas while shamanism, as such, should be examined separately as the religious practice of individuals who are not Buddhist monks (or nuns).

However, it should be recognized that with the arrival of the Altai lamas, the shamanistic component might have sharply

increased in the religious practice of Kalmyks. That is why the Russian scholars and researchers who had started to visit the Kalmyk steppes since the late sixties of the eighteenth century¹⁶⁸ paid special attention to the influence of shamans (Kalm. “be”).

As far as Altai lamas are concerned, it should also be noted that one of them was elected the head lama of Kalmyks¹⁶⁹ which was an exceptional case. This personage, known as Delek lama, came to Kalmyks somewhere at the end of July in 1758 with the Donduk Dashi’s mission returning after their visit to the Dalai Lama. Obviously, it was this lama mentioned by Donduk Dashi in his letter to Spitsin of March 5, 1758, alongside a request to send him a medical man from the Altai assigned to the Khanate: “in the ulus there is one noble among the monks and a healer who could be useful in treating my illness”¹⁷⁰ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:24].

Upon his arrival, Delek lama proclaimed himself a “senior reincarnation”, i.e. a khutukhta. He was obviously an exceptional personality with outstanding abilities; according

¹⁶⁸ We mean, in particular, the works by P.S. Pallas and I.G. Georgy who came to the Astrakhan steppes with an aim to study Kalmyks in 1768-1769. These were the regions where the Altai groups roamed the steppes together with the Kalmyks.

¹⁶⁹ The term “head lama” itself was arbitrarily used as there had been no agreement in the literature in the field as far as the title of the chief, or first, lama of Kalmyks was concerned until the issue of “The Tsar Approved Provisions on the Regulation of the Kalmyk People’s Affairs” of 1834 which introduced the position of the Lama of the Kalmyk People (see also “The Provisions...” of 1847).

¹⁷⁰ “В котором улусе есть де один знатной из духовных, да один лекарь, которые для моей болезни совершенно де пользовать могут”.

to Ubashi Khan, this lama “...upon his arrival and still not knowing many people, has shown a number of surprising deeds”¹⁷¹ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:30]. As Spitsin pointed out, “... he was worshiped by the Kalmyk population as if he was their burkhan (deity – B.K.) and that is why he is recognized as a khutukhta lama and has become their head lama in accordance with their law”¹⁷² [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:20].

However, his rule was not long as very soon (about the end of October 1759) his own shabiners (most likely, given to him by Donduk Dashi) sent a complaint to the Khan reporting “on his most unlikely behavior and damage to their burkhans inflicted by him and other improper acts, etc...”¹⁷³ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:29] (sic). Besides, one cannot exclude a possibility of the lama’s claims for additional means of control over the Khanate. Indignant at this behavior of the religious personality, Donduk Dashi released him from his high position and even put him under arrest. This exceptional measure was applied to the senior monk in accord with the “Amendments to the Law”, i.e. the Mongolian-Oirat Law of 1640. The Amendments were approved by the Khan earlier, somewhere in the mid-fifties and provided, among other things, stricter measures of

¹⁷¹ “как сюда приехал, и с нами еще не обвыкнув, удивительные дела произвел”.

¹⁷² “оному весь калмыцкий народ поклоняется на подобие как бы их бурханом, почему он, хутухту лама, после того в правление свое по их закону и вступил”.

¹⁷³ “о учиненных от него немалых предерзостях повреждениями их бурханов, и других противных поступках, и о прочем”.

punishment for lamas and novices in case of violations of their vow resolutions, duties, etc.

On receiving the news of these events, N. Spitsin thought it was not appropriate for a lama to be under arrest and insisted on his release.

Soon after these events, in about a year, at the beginning of the year 1761, Donduk Dashi Khan died and his son Ubashi succeeded him as the Khan of Kalmyks. On March 28, 1761 Spitsin received a letter from the new Khan concerning Delek lama which said: "Now we have some doubts concerning him as it has become known that not only at present but at the time of Khuntaiji¹⁷⁴ he made wonders, this was reported by Zengors, both by nobles and ordinary people, who had seen and heard about these... Besides, curious times have come since last year as he by accident makes the ground dry and produces irregular thunderstorms and rainbows and also fire fall..."¹⁷⁵(sic). Ubashi accused the lama of causing his father's death and in fact refused to regard him as a lama: "...it was really strange that the Khan died so suddenly, nobody had had any premonition. It has been revealed to us in our books that the Khan was the victim of the monk's

¹⁷⁴ Probably, Galdan Tseren is meant here, also known as Batur Khuntaiji; ruled in 1727-1746, the heyday of the Dzungar Khanate was reached under his rule.

¹⁷⁵ "Ныне нам о нем сумнение произошло и известно учинилось, понеже зенгорские владельцы и все знатные и подлые люди объявили, что он не токмо ныне, но еще во времена хун-тайджи слышали и видели, что он волшебные дела творил... И еще с прошлого года время от обыкновениеи своих изменилось, понеже он не чаянно землю суху чинит, и не вовремя гром и радуги производит, еще огню падения чинит...".

magic doings... Taking into consideration all of this, we do not trust him any longer”¹⁷⁶ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:30]. Thus, worried by Delek’s improper behavior and fearing bad influence on his people, Ubashi Khan demands that Spitsin should “send this lama to some distant place far away from Kalmyks for his indecent acts...”¹⁷⁷ [NA KR. coll. 36, list 1, doc. 330:91]. Aware of the predicament in which both the secular and religious leaders of Kalmyks found themselves, N. Spitsin addressed his request to the Collegium for Foreign Affairs.

In the summer of 1761 he received an order to send khutukhta lama Delek to the Collegium, accompanied by one of his own people. In autumn Delek lama was sent to Petersburg with his nephew, who was also a monk, but on his way he fell ill and died in Voronezh-town [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 429:34]. That was the end of a short but, in a way, rather outstanding period in the career of the Altai lama as the head of the Kalmyk Buddhist community. In our opinion, this time had a significant influence on the development of Buddhism of Kalmyks, especially if the overall religious effect of the Altai lamas is taken into consideration. It may be presumed that Delek lama had something to do with shamans if he dared to inflict damage to the sacred religious subjects and made an active use of his paranormal gifts to do harm to the religion. It may be also right to note here that this was

¹⁷⁶ “и чтоб так нечаянно хан умер, в помышлении не было. И мы все в наших книгах усмотрели, что он волшебством духовной персоны умер... Из того усмотря, мы ему вовсе не доверяем”.

¹⁷⁷ “чтоб его ламу за непристойные сво поступки отлучить в отдаленное место где б калмыков не было”.

probably characteristic, to a various degree, of all the Altai lamas as their homeland, Altai, was that unique place “where the crude forms of shamanism and black magic have flourished till most recent times”¹⁷⁸ [Roerich, 1992:235]. It may be concluded then that shamanism and certain specific rituals of “folk” Buddhism started to spread again among Kalmyks chiefly under the influence of the Altai lamas.

Ten years later, at the beginning of the year 1771, when Ubashi Khan led the majority of his people to return back to their historic homeland, Dzungaria, the majority of the Altai population of the Khoshoutovsky ulus departed together with the ulus to the East and thus returned back to Altai. Those who stayed behind gradually lost the memory of their historical past and assimilated with the local Kalmyk population. As far as the Khoshoutovsky ulus is concerned where Altai people had been settled by Donduk Dashi Khan, N. Palmov pointed out that Zamyan Khan of the Khoshoutovsky ulus who stayed on the Volga with a score of kibitkas had a compensation for the loss of his people. “The Astrakhan Governor of the time, Beketov, gave Zamyan kibitkas left by their former owners and thus a large ulus was formed again which had the same name – Khoshoutovsky”¹⁷⁹ [NA KR. coll. 145, list 1, doc. 358:3].

¹⁷⁸ “где до последнего времени грубые формы шаманизма и колдовства процветали”.

¹⁷⁹ “тогдашний астраханский губернатор Бекетов приписал к Замьяну калмыцкие кибитки, лишившиеся своих прежних владельцев, из него снова образовался большой улус, удержавший прежнее название Хошутовского”.

Even much later, Kalmyks still remembered the Altai people who shared the same religious views with them and their long standing relationships. In 1896 two of the Astrakhan Kalmyks, one of them a merchant and the other a taishi, visited Altai on their way to Urga. They were guests at Mandi Kuljin's place who was a bai they met at the Tsar Coronation ceremony in Moscow. While in Altai, the Kalmyks made attempts to revive the interest of the local population in Buddhism reminding them that it was the religion of their ancestors [Danilin, 1993:53].

The search for spiritual guiding ideas and efforts at preserving their ethnic and cultural identification under the pressure of Russian colonization policy resulted in the organization of an ideological movement in Altai known as "Burkhanism". There was a reformation movement (Obnovlenchestvo) among the Kalmyk lamas as well, but this is beyond the scope of the present work.

A mixture of various Buddhist traditions with shamanism was also characteristic of the Oirats of Dzungaria, the difference being that the Geluk School here did not become dominant.

As a result of the departure of the majority of the people back to Dzungaria and isolation from Tibet that followed the event, Buddhism of Kalmyks acquired a new direction in its development and hence it may be concluded that with certain reservations it may be defined as a local variant of Tibetan Buddhism in the south part (north Caspian region) of Russia.

The beginnings of the specific features of Oirat Buddhism are to be found not only in the influence of some particular events of the ethnic and political history of the people but also in the fact that Western Mongolians were in the proximity to the places where the influence of the "Yellow Hats" was dominant. A certain role was also played by traditionally close ties of the Geluk with such sub-schools of Kagyu as the Drikung, Pagmodu, Karma, as well as by specific features of the tantric teachings and folk culture. Tolerance in the interactions with other societies, cultures and lifestyles was characteristic of Buddhism in the past and continues today. There were no obstacles to the development of other religions and teachings in the Oirat khanates. The Oirat khans supported Buddhism in every possible way, presenting lamas with generous gifts and sending costly present to Tibet. But at the same time the activities of the religious figures were under their control.

The Tibetan influence was a characteristic feature of the Oirat culture and politics throughout the Middle Ages. In dealing with such a complex issue as the identification of the chronological framework, the history of the spread, and the reasons for the success or failure of particular teachings among Oirats, it is necessary first of all to find out the real meaning of the events which took place in the period of Tibetan history under study while studying at the same time the international situation and relationships of the Central Asian states.

CONCLUSION

Oirats (Kalmyks) belonged to the so called “civilization of nomadic societies” characterized by an active exploration of new territories, the development of specific cultural values and social institutions and, in particular, by their participation in building a network of intercultural communications and hence in a retranslation of the information stored in the cultural centers, etc. The last characteristic is of special importance as it helps to understand the ease with which nomads established contacts both between individuals and cultures and mentalities, in general. The embrace of Buddhism by nomads is a special subject. Thus, the ideas of karma and nirvana, of the ignorance of darkness and the bliss of enlightenment, of the values of life and methods to an understanding of the world had a profound effect on the Oirats. The Buddhist teaching became an organic part of their activities both in their domestic and international spheres and contributed to finding necessary compromises, as well as intensifying their awareness of the interdependence of human entities on earth.

The Buddhism of the Oirats (Kalmyks) has had a long and complicated history which is represented in the works of medieval scholars of Tibet, China, Persia, Russia, the

Caucasus, as well as of Central Asian and Mongolian speaking peoples. A close examination of Buddhism's spreading and of the specific features allows us to reconstruct some main events in the history of the religion in a particular period of its development in Central Asia, as well as its specific reflections in the politics, ideology and culture of Western Mongolians.

Through Genghis Khan's expansions, the Oirats managed to get acquainted with a whole variety of the religious views existent in medieval Central Asia, though among these the impact of the Uyghur Buddhism proved to be most profound. This very period (the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries) may be regarded as the first, early stage of the Buddhist tradition (in its Uyghur form) among Oirats.

Other Western Mongolian groups such as the Kereit, Naiman and Merkit who had joined the Oirats brought their rich tradition of Nestorian Christianity. Along with the traditional shamanism, ideas of Tangut (Tibetan) Buddhism, all these spiritual teachings contributed to a specific character of the intensive and diverse spiritual life of Oirats. This period (the first half of the thirteenth century) marks the beginning of the second (middle) stage in the spread of Buddhism (specifically the Kagyu School teachings) among Oirats which lasted till the sixteenth century. Of great interest is further research into the Buddhist history of Oirats in the state of Ilkhans, the influence of Shiite-Sunni culture of Persia on Western Mongols and an introduction of the ethnonym "Kalmyk" and "Shazhin Lama" title in the context of the middle stage in the Buddhist history of the nomads.

The rivalry between Western and Eastern Mongols in their attempts to restore Genghis Khan's Empire resulted in many centuries hostilities between them. Representatives of different Tibetan Buddhist traditions were also involved in their struggle, resorting to the Mongolian weapon in attempts to establish their influence both in Tibet and among Mongolian speaking peoples. As early as the mid-thirteenth century Tibetan Buddhism was divided in accordance with their patronage by different Mongolian groups. Thus, Oirats were close to the Kagyu sub-schools while the Mongols had special relationship with the Sakya School.

The Ming dynasty, which substituted the Yuan emperors, prevented the maintenance of close contacts between the Buddhist nomads and their Tibetan spiritual tutors as the new dynasty strove to become an exceptional religious ("Celestial") center for all its neighboring and distant nations. Nevertheless, the data available primarily from Chinese sources shows that Tibetan lamas were quite active in their preaching among Oirats between the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Qing dynasty, the Manchu by origin, which established its rule over China in the mid-seventeenth century, continued the practice of patronage of different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Besides, to further ensure its authority it proclaimed that the blessed empire had been restored by the dynasty with the Dharma-Raja (i.e. the patron as the protector of the faith) at its head and went so far as to take over some of the functions of the Tibetan clergy (such as, for example, "finding" the right "reincarnations").

The spread of the Geluk teachings among the Western Mongolian Torgout and Khoshout clans and their further union with the Dzungar, Derbet, Khoit and other Oirat groups changed radically the religious situation in that region of Central Asia. The importance of Tibet as a sacred center had greatly increased while Buddhism was now seen as the necessary component in rebuilding Genghis Khan's Empire. An active promotion of the idea of the unity of the secular and religious powers led to considerable involvement of the clergy in political campaigning.

Since the second half of the sixteenth century the Oirats had gone through a long phase of the social-political crisis to be completed in the forties of the seventeenth century by the disintegration of their united state and formation of the three separate Oirat states on the Eurasian continent: the Dzungar Khanate in Central Asia, the Khoshut Khanate in Northern Tibet and the Kalmyk Khanate within the Russian Empire. Since the late sixteenth century the situation in Tibet itself had also been characterized by a systemic crisis, growing tension and greater involvement of Mongolian peoples in the Tibetan internal strife. The influence of the Kagyu sub-schools on the Dzungars continued which was demonstrated again in the events happened in 1717-1720. Long standing, steady ties of the Torgout and Khoshout with the Geluk School led to the predominance of "Yellow Hats" in their khanates. The syncretic, to a certain degree, character of the Geluk teachings contributed to the increase of the social basis of the followers of this teaching among Oirats. Different schools of Tibetan Buddhism in favor of particular groups of Oirats is one of the most characteristic features in the history

of the spread and establishment of this religion among Western Mongolians.

The interaction of the different regional-economic and ethnopolitical structures, religious spheres and values of the Tibetan and Oirat societies led to transformations of the Buddhist religion. The nomadic lifestyle and warlike nature of Oirats resulted in small number of lamas, absence of “khubilgans” (“reincarnations”), in the priority of the secular power over the religious one, peaceful coexistence of different Buddhist schools, the superior position of the Dalai Lama (including his right to grant the khan regalia), etc. One should also point out such particular features of the Oirat ideology as glorification of episodes of their past serving as ideal models, the attempts to follow the Genghis Khan’s “Yasa” (worked out into the Law Code of 1640), maintaining allies’ relationship with Tibet and restoration of Genghis Khan’s Empire; even a long history of their hostile relations with China can be seen as an example of “eternal rivalry”.

Throughout their history (including both the Central Asian and Russian periods) the Oirats were permanently in a state of war waged against neighboring countries. Some of the reasons for those military conflicts were of an economic nature (control over the trade routes, exchange of goods, etc.), partly political ambitions (the building of a strong united empire) and, obviously, the need to survive in the hostile environment. But these wars had never been waged for the sake of the spread of the religion or its enforcement on other cultures and nations.

Since the forties of the seventeenth century the Oirat states had entered their period of growth and power. The original writing system was introduced, which led to an intensive translation activity of Buddhist treatises from Tibetan, Sanskrit, Old Mongolian, and Chinese into Oirat, many of the Oirat and Kalmyk lamas studied at the Tibetan monasteries. The stabilization of the Geluk School's position as the dominant one for Oirats and the spread of the Tantra teachings among them were associated with the names of Neiji Toin and Zaya Pandit. The arrival of the new epoch was marked by new names: Anjjatan Lama, Shakur Lama and their disciples were among those who helped their khans to contribute to the growth of "the great, uncountable and boundless amount of virtue"¹⁸⁰ [Dorji Jodva, 1993:133] for the well-being of their people and all the sentient beings. The nomadic traditions of an ecologically balanced exploitation of natural resources were further supported by the Buddhist teachings on the interdependence of all beings in the world and this worldview had been nurtured by the steppe population for centuries passing on from generation to generation.

However, since the late seventeenth century the negative tendencies had increased in the development of the Dzungar and Khoshut Khanates; their conflicts with China had started afresh and finally led to the destruction of those states by the Qing in the period between 1730-th – 1750-th. In the same period, i.e. since the late seventeenth century the Kalmyk Khanate, on the contrary, had flourished, increasing its

¹⁸⁰ "великое, неизмеримое и неисчислимое количество добродетели".

influence on all the processes in the region of the Caspian Sea and Northern Caucasus. The Kalmyks, in fact, had never been involved in any wars against Russians as they had agreed from the very beginning of their interactions to serve as their frontier guards and they had kept their promise. A sudden appearance there of the warlike nomads made Moscow finally take a decision in choosing a strategic ally in this most important direction of its geopolitical interests.

The Oirats managed to maintain a progressive development of their states on the basis of a sustainable developed economy, a strong army and a policy of supporting the religion of their people and respecting the faiths of others. Buddhism was used largely as an ideology and therefore it was under the strict control of a state.

The conflict between Tibetan Buddhist doctrines and values and the social-political system of the warlike Oirats resulted in considerable transformations in the organizational and theoretical structure of the clergy, as well as in greater involvement of lamas in political affairs, on the one hand, and in the development of a new Oirat ideology, on the other hand. This ideology was aimed at providing the sustainability of the people in a complicated situation characterized by political, economic, social and religious turmoil in Central Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and, finally, led the society to a new stage of its development. Thus, the evolution in the interaction of Buddhism and the Oirat society was determined by both social-economic and political reasons.

The present research help us to provide the ways to spheres, where one can find the important ideas and means in issue how to develop the local Buddhist culture. Nowadays Kalmyks, descendants of Oirats, face with the problems in keeping and further development of the Buddhist heritage. The long lasting influence on Oirats (Kalmyks) of culture and Buddhist civilization of Tibet, China and India allows us to assume, that the preservation of Buddhist civilization, located in faraway Caspian region (Kalmyk Republic), is possible only if these states restore their civilizational role. A lot of changes have happened since the Middle Ages, but the current circumstances lead us to conclusion, that only the revitalization of Buddhist civilization, rooted in the old relationship between Oirats (Kalmyks) and Tibet, between nomadic and Tibetan cultures, is able to give the perspective for the future development of the local Caspian Buddhist civilization.

Appendix

An Edict

of Her Imperial Majesty, the Empress of All Russia Sent by the State Collegium for Foreign Affairs to General- Lieutenant, Cavalier and Governor of Siberia Mr Myatlev

It follows from your report of February 26, 1756 that double-taxed¹⁸¹ Tatars came to Bikatunskaya fortress with the news from thirteen Zengor zaisangs. The zaisangs request Russian citizenship, while Zaisang Ombo points out that many of their people who were waiting for an answer from the Russian side were captured and taken away by the Chinese.

Nevertheless, Ombo still has some people under his control including Bukhara and Uryankhai military men, over a thousand in number. Worried about their future and in fear of being driven to inner China, Ombo and those of his close circles ask for Russian citizenship to be granted to them as soon as possible. And they are ready to pay all the tributes required.

If the decision has not been taken yet, he asks for permission to settle down within the Russian fortresses by the rivers Inya

¹⁸¹ Double-taxed are those who have to pay tribute to two sovereigns, Dzungars and Russians in this case.

and Belaya. If the Russian government does not trust him, he is ready to give amanats (hostages) and take an oath of allegiance on the sacred book. Besides, Ombo informs that Chinese have sent ambassadors to make a peace agreement with Kazakhs and for this purpose the Chinese plan to pass through Russian fortresses. So, do not let the Chinese pass through Russian fortresses; take Zaisang Ombo's and other zaisangs' children as hostages and decide who will provide for them.

When we asked Ombo's ambassador whether the zaisang would agree to live among the Volga Kalmyks (Kalmyks) or Brotherly Kalmyks (Buryats), he answered that he would rather stay in the regions he had indicated (mentioned above): near the rivers Inya and Belaya.

We also received a report from the Governor of Orenburg, Actual Privy Councilor Neptyuev whom you had asked for some forces from Uyskaya line (Yaic Cossacks) in case of a decision to take Zengors under protection. Having taken into consideration the situation as it was, Neptyuev answered to you that we need to take the chance and persuade Zengors (i.e. Altai people – B.K.) in every possible way. If they agree without any reservations to join Volga Kalmyks, they should be immediately naturalized. Instructions were also sent to the Governor of the Kalmyk Khanate Donduk Dashi to send his people to Zengors to persuade them to move to the Volga. But it is necessary to persuade them to accept the offer without waiting for Donduk Dashi's envoys.

As far as the forces that you have asked for are concerned, this is not an easy question as Yaic Cossacks will be able to

move forward only in the mid-summer time as their horses need fodder. Besides, Yaic Cossacks protect the Uyskaya line against Kazakh and Bashkir raids and other possible enemies. And you have your own Siberian Cossacks who have been sent to you for dealing with such tasks.

Alongside your report of March 9, 1756 sent to us we also received two letters from Zengor zaisangs in which they promised to serve our state if they became Russian subjects. Zaisang Namka reports that the former Dzungar Dabachi Khan has been captured by Chinese and now their new ruler is Amursanan who was once on the Chinese side. Zengors do not want to be under the Chinese or Kalmyk rule, they want to be Russian subjects. Having taken into consideration this situation, we have come to the following decision.

For their special power proceeding from the numerical strength of Zengor people, as well as at the expense of other neighboring people that they from time to time subjugated, the former Dzungar rulers posed a threat to Siberia as dangerous neighbors. It is known that Dzungars, including their last ruler Erdeni Lama Batur Khuntaiji, killed by Dabachi, has had claims on many of the Siberian regions extending to the Om river. They could have taken these territories if we did not have negotiations with them that we have conducted right till the present moment. You know that we have tried not to irritate Dzungars and have gone so far as to allow them to cross our borders so that they can exact their tribute from Barabins (i.e. Barabin Tatars – B.K.) though they are separated not only by our state border but also by whole Russian uezds (districts). If we had stopped them from

that they could have attacked our Siberian fortresses (and lines such as Kuznetskaya, Kolivanskaya, Irtyshskaya, as well as the Kolivano-Voskresensky factory) while we do not have enough forces to resist their attacks.

Thus, this may be of use that the Zengor people would be weakened and degraded because of the internal strife if it happened between their owners now, or if the Chinese side expanded further as they are doing now without any involvement on our side. The weaker they are the safer will be the situation on the borderline in Siberia.

In this situation we, from our side, must not undertake anything even if the Chinese begin to take them prisoners. In this case they can be driven away from their former settlement areas and, consequently, from our borders and then be mixed up with other people. That is why we must make the most of the situation as it is, including naturalization of their former subjects. But first we have to decide where they are to be accommodated. As you know, it has been decided before that they have to be sent either to Volga Kalmyks or Brotherly Kalmyks¹⁸².

Actual Privy Councilor Neplyuev has informed us of your opinion that Brotherly Kalmyks live near the border where there are few regular and irregular forces and that is why if Chinese wanted to drive them away from there then it would be impossible for us not only to preserve, but also to protect them. Besides, there will be a danger posed to Kyakhtinsky outpost and the town of Nerchinsk where we have silver

¹⁸² Brotherly Kalmyks are Buryats.

mines. We do not have enough forces to protect those distant outposts.

Moreover, we cannot completely trust the Zengors themselves, who want our protection, for their changeable character. One cannot exclude a situation that, in case they feel some dissatisfaction or see that we do not have enough forces and few local people, they can easily overcome Brotherly Kalmyks and go back to their former homeland or ask for Chinese protection. Besides, Brotherly Kalmyks have become sedentary while Zengors are still nomadic and this is an important difference. Also, they usually make fires without taking any precautions which may be dangerous for our forests including fir trade and other trades. Therefore, your arguments will be taken into consideration.

As far as zaisang Ombo's request to allow him to travel along the river Charish and others is concerned, it must be pointed out that these rivers flow into Ob river which is near Kolivano-Voskresensky factories. Here again we have few forces and that is why in view of the problems similar to those we have seen in accommodating Zengors among Brotherly Kalmyks, this variant of their settlement along the rivers mentioned above seems to be unacceptable at all. That is why in the letter sent by the Collegium for Foreign Affairs to Actual Privy Councilor Neplyuev on January 27, 1756 (a copy of the letter was sent to you) it has been pointed out among other things that it is impossible to allow Zengors to stay in Siberia.

There is also another reason: as we have a limited number of forces here Dzungars and Kazakhs will not be likely to leave

them alone. It is also important that Zengors ask Her Imperial Majesty for protection so that to avoid the Chinese subjection. They themselves want to remain free and therefore are ready to pay their three years' tribute in advance. Thus, this readiness of theirs to make their contribution to the treasury is not worthwhile especially if the circumstances under which Zengors have to give these promises are taken into consideration as it may turn out that we will have to pay eventually much more for the reception of their contribution.

As far as their promise to aid with their forces is concerned, there is not much use in this either as they will have to fight against those of their kin if there is any need of this kind. It is no good in using them against Kazakhs either for long distances separating them; besides, they will be reluctant to leave their territories. Thus, Zengors will not be able to contribute to the regional security in any way. The outside factor – Dzungars – should also be kept in mind. In case they manage to defend themselves against Chinese forces and overcome their own internal strife, there is no doubt that their new ruler would like to have Zengors back and this may result in a conflict between us. All of this taken into consideration, it is necessary to take the Zengors to be naturalized away from the borders.

In view of the nomadic lifestyle of Zengors and no prospect for their turn to a sedentary lifestyle, the Collegium for Foreign Affairs still insists that they should be resettled to Volga Kalmyks as you were instructed accordingly in the edict of January 27 of the current year of 1756. In this case

they will have no chance for escape. Besides, Dzungars will not have any opportunity to return them back from there. There is another reason we have to take them under our protection: if their request is declined they can go to Kazakhs who are already making all kinds of plans in view of the Dzungars' predicament, and if Zengors join them, then, they may be prompted to act decisively.

So, we order you that you should not refuse the Zengor rulers to grant Russian citizenship to them and you should not insist on their resettlement to Volga Kalmyks, but decide where to allow them to roam depending on the circumstances. The point is that this should not tell on the security of the Russian settlements. Moreover, it is of importance because as early as 1731, while visiting the Russian Imperial court, the Chinese ambassador Askani Amba Toshi requested to give shelter to Zengor refugees in view of the Chinese-Dzungar war. He also promised to give Russia their land in case of necessity. That is why we will decide where to settle them upon receiving from you the news that Zengors have in fact accepted the Russian protection.

You also have to inform us about their number as in case they are not numerous we will enforce them eventually to move to join Volga Kalmyks. If they are rather numerous, they should be returned eventually if they would like to do so or if the Dzungar khan insists on their return. In any way, this will prevent them from joining Kazakhs as their strengthening should be avoided. Kazakhs are Muslims and since we have a large number of Muslims in Siberia and Orenburgskaya district, their increase is even more dangerous

than the growth of Dzungars. Everything which has been said above concerns only Zengors. If there are any Bukhara and other Mahometans among the Zengor population who ask for Her Imperial Majesty's protection, they must not be sent to Volga Kalmyks in any way. These are to be settled in yurts near Tobolsk or in some other Siberian regions if they are in large numbers. The reason for this decision is that, though they are Dzungar subjects, they do differ from them by their origin. Therefore, they differ from them and from our Kalmyks by their religion and language. So, that would not be the right decision to send them to Volga Kalmyks who, as a rule, travel in the vicinity of Muslim populations of the Caucasus. That is why it is better to leave them behind in Siberia. Besides, they normally earn their living by trade.

In conclusion, we instruct you that in case the Lama and zaisang sent by the Kalmyk Khanate Governor Donduk Dashi fail to persuade the Zengor zaisangs to migrate to Volga Kalmyks, leave the lama and zaisang near the border and assign them the same task concerning the escaping Zengors. Send those who want to Volga Kalmyks and those reluctant to do so should find temporary accommodation in accordance with your decision. The Kalmyk Lama and zaisang mentioned above should be assigned, in the name of Her Imperial Majesty, to collect information about the situation in Dzungaria after the death of Galdan Tseren Khan. They have to write a note in their own language containing the information we need and send it to the Collegium for Foreign Affairs.

Copies of this edict are sent to the Senate, Military Collegium and Actual Privy Councilor Neplyuev.

Made up on May 2, 1756 in Saint-Petersburg.

Received on May 24, 1756 in Tobolsk.

The State Archive of Omskaya Oblast. Coll. 1, doc. 43, p. 238-251.

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HJAS – *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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NG – *National Geographic*. Washington, DC.

RUDN – Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia
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SPS – Shata Pitaka Series. New Delhi.

TP – T’oung Pao. Leiden.

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ZIRAO – The Notes of the Emperor’s Russian Archeological Society. (Записки Императорского русского археологического общества, Санкт-Петербург)

ZIRGO – The Notes of the Emperor’s Russian Geographical Society. (Записки Императорского русского географического общества, Санкт-Петербург)

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GLOSSARY

Arat – the ordinary Mongolian nomads

Bodhisattva – the Enlightened being, whose aim is to bring every living being to the Enlightenment, to state of Buddha

Bon – old Tibetan religion

Chakravartin – “Person who Turns the Wheel of Dharma”

Dharma – teaching of Buddha

Gelung – lama with 253 vows

Hevajra – the defender of Buddhism

Ilkhan – the highest title of ruler used among Mongolian and Turkish nations

Kalachakra – “Wheel of Time”, the Tantric teaching from Shambhala realm

Karma – sum of any previous action or thought; Tibetan Buddhist School.

Khan – ruler of a clan

Khagan – Khan of all Mongolian clans

Lharamba – one of the highest degree in Tibetan Buddhism

Lhatsunpa – the title of high ranking Buddhist priest

Mahakala – the defender of Buddhism

Manjushri – Bodhisattva of Akshobhya Buddha, emanation of wisdom

Noyon – high ranking nobleman

Rabjamba – one of the highest degree in Tibetan Buddhism

Sangha – the society of Buddhist monks

Shambhala – the mysterious and mythological realm in Buddhism, located somewhere in Tibet or in a space

Taiji – high ranking nobleman

Zaisang – a head of a group of khotons (khton consisted of several kibitkas)

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